

A LITTLE SLEEP, A LITTLE SLUMBER

BOOKS BY NORMAN KATKOV
EAGLE AT MY EYES
A LITTLE SLEEP, A LITTLE SLUMBER

DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC., GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK, 1949

A LITTLE

BY NORMAN KATKOV SLEEP,

A LITTLE

SLUMBER

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Printed in the United States
at The Country Life Press, Garden City, N. Y.
First Edition

TO MY FATHER, HYMAN KATKOV
AND TO HIS SONS
ROBERT, MORRIS, HAROLD

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to sleep . . .

PROVERBS 24:33

A LITTLE SLEEP, A LITTLE SLUMBER

Walking away from the plane toward the administration building, Joe Simon was praying for his father. "Let him be all right," he said silently, his lips moving. "Let him be alive, please let him. Please, please," he said, forming the words.

He could not remember ever praying. He walked down the canopy-covered ramp, his hands in his coat pockets, looking at his shoes as though someone might see him and think him crazy.

"Please, God, please," he said, walking slowly, the other passengers moving past him toward the group at the gate.

"You know," he said. "You know what he's done. All he's done for us. God. The kind of life he had. Everything for us. Not a good day. God," he said. "God.

"God," he said. "You know," and then he saw Marty there at the gate and started running toward his younger brother.

"Mart," he said. "Hey, Mart," he yelled. The other saw Joe, broke away from the group, and came toward him.

"Joe," Marty said, grinning, offering his hand, which the other took. "Plane's late," he said.

"Mart," Joe said, and watched his brother. "How's Pa?"

"Sleeping when I left," Marty said. He put his arm through his brother's. "Where's your baggage check?" he asked as they walked toward the administration building.

"I got it. Takes a few minutes to unload the plane," Joe said. "Is he all right?"

"He's sick," Marty said. "Be sure of that, he's sick."

Joe had gotten the letter from Hy the day before. He'd come into the city room in New York about five o'clock in the afternoon, and there was the special delivery. Lev Simon had had another coronary. Maybe it would be a good idea for Joe to come home. Hub was on his way from Los Angeles. Marty was coming up from Chicago on a late afternoon plane.

All right, he's sick, Joe thought as they went into the administration building. So he's sick. This isn't the first time.

"Did you sleep?" Marty asked.

"Couple hours," Joe said of the overnight flight. "When'd you get in, Mart?"

"Seven o'clock last night."

"How is he?" Joe asked again.

"Sick," Marty said, releasing Joe's arm. "Let's get in line there for your bags."

"Yeah," Joe said. He stopped, put his hands to his hips, and bent backward. "I'm stiff," he said.

"You look stiff. How's the newspaper business, Joe?"

"All right. How's Ma?"

"You know Ma. The same."

Joe watched the younger man, his head bare and the red hair unkempt. A medic, he thought. He and Hy both doctors in a few years; the old man must be proud.

"Here, Marty," Joe said, extending his baggage check. "You get the bag and I'll call Ma, tell her I got here all right. What time's Hub due in?"

"Noon. He was grounded in Kansas City and he's on the

train." As Marty turned away Joe took his arm and swung him around.

"How is he?" Joe asked.

Joe saw the red flush begin at the younger man's neck and he remembered Marty's temper. "I told you he's sick. I'll tell you again: he's sick. Go on now, call Ma."

When Joe left the telephone booth Marty was standing near the door, the suitcase at his feet. Marty carried it, leading Joe to the parking lot and the maroon sedan.

"Hy still driving the Ford to school?" Joe asked.

Marty laughed. "It runs. I don't know how he keeps it running, but he does."

Marty dropped the suitcase on the rear seat and stepped back from the car. He stood uncertainly for a moment, looking at his oldest brother to whom certain rights had always been due in his father's house. "You want to drive?" he asked at last.

Joe grinned and pushed him forward. "Go ahead. I'm too tired," he said.

They left the parking lot and drove down the road toward Minnehaha Parkway. The airport lay within the Minneapolis city limits, and they had to cross the Mississippi into St. Paul. They would drive through the sections of both towns that Joe liked best. Now, sitting beside his younger brother, Joe had the weariness in his legs, in his back, in his neck. His mouth felt stale from the sleepless night of smoking. As always when he came home, riding through the streets he knew so well, he felt he had not been away at all, or, at most, had left the city on a short trip.

"How does he look, Mart?" Joe asked.

"Not so good."

"What does that mean, not so good?"

"Joe, I told you, he had another coronary. Each one takes that much more out of him."

"But he's all right?"

"Yes."

"You're lying."

"Yes, I'm lying." Marty stopped for a red light, moving the hand shift into neutral.

"What are you lying for? I've asked you ten times how he feels. How is he?"

Marty had one hand on the wheel, the other on the hand shift. He wouldn't look at Joe. They were on the parkway now and, flanking the road, the land dropped away to the falls beyond.

"Marty," Joe said.

Joe could hear him breathing.

"Mart."

Marty turned then, and Joe thought he had never seen anyone as sad.

He put his hand over Marty's and he said: "Go ahead."

The amber warning light glowed below the red.

"Go ahead, Mart."

"I didn't want to say anything there at the airport," Marty said.

"Didn't I know it?"

"With all those people."

"I could feel it," Joe said. "All the way on the plane."

"Jesus," Marty said, and he moved his head slowly from side to side.

"Tell me," Joe urged. "Go ahead, tell me." Please, Joe said to himself. God, please.

"Marty," Joe said.

Marty turned away, looking to the road as the green light flashed. "He's dying, Joe. Lying there in bed and he's dying."

The horns sounded behind them.

"Mart," Joe said.

"He's dying, Joe," Marty said, as though he must make his brother believe it. Marty tried to pull the shift into first gear,

but it stuck, the motor sounding as though someone were running a stick across an iron-picket fence.

Marty cursed, the horns sounding behind them, and then, as the motor died, Joe opened the door and got out of the car and walked across the grass toward the falls.

"I knew it," he said, and wanted to weep. "Didn't I know it?" he said.

How about that, all those stories of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty waiting for the immigrants? How about that, those pictures you've seen with the women wearing kerchiefs and the bearded men looking at the promised land?

All of them against the rail, and the tears coming down their cheeks? Lower Manhattan in the morning sun: freedom and safety, pray where you want—Lev Simon never prayed in his life. All the kids grow up doctors and lawyers and senators and baseball players. Two years for first papers, three more and you vote. You *vote*, mister. How about that, eh?

You understand, we learned it that way. Everybody's pa and ma, or grandfather, or *great*-grandfather came from somewhere; nobody's American but the Indian.

Understand, it's what people believe. You believe it. Listen to them before an election and you hear it all the time. Lev Simon always listened in St. Paul.

You see, this talk about Americans all, everybody brothers,

stand up and look a man in the eye, that's all right for the history books. It's the legend. Nothing wrong with it, except the facts. You don't have to change the story either, just attach a rider here and there, that's all.

People taking ship in Europe, all they owned tied in a blanket or in one trunk; you remember high school history, we were taught that way. Come steerage, come cattle boat, swim over if you can, Washington says okay, we want all we can get.

They didn't want Lev Simon, or Sarah, his wife, or Joe, his son.

They closed the door on them in Antwerp. They made it to Belgium all right in the spring of 1921, and he went to the American consul. He heard about quotas then.

Just so many a year, he was told. You wait your turn. Go back to Russia and wait, he was told. He'd had enough then, all right. The Czar's army and the Czar's pogroms, and then Simon's Yiddish brother, Mr. Trotsky. Simon had it up to here then.

You think about something long enough, keep it in your head; take it out only at night and in the darkness with the door locked and bolted, hold it close to you and secret, and after a while you've got to have it. You make a break for what you want, no matter how thick and high the wall.

They told Simon he could go to Canada and he said sure, he'd go. He and his wife and his baby son, they'd go to Canada.

Listen, about that Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty story, Lev Simon went to the movies, he saw it.

Listen, he couldn't wait any longer. He figured the clock was running out on him, do you understand that?

They got to Quebec and lived the summer and winter through in a single room on the fourth floor of a dismal boardinghouse near the railroad station. The city was packed with fresh-come Jews, all of them stranded in Europe when the quota system was announced.

There were meeting places: basements of synagogues, cheap restaurants, the waiting room at the station where Jews gathered while they hoped for the sesame to America, but Lev Simon had listened to such hopeless, cringing, defeated talk all his life and he stayed away from them.

He worked through December, wrapping bundles in one of the big stores, on his feet fourteen and sixteen and sometimes twenty hours a day, putting penny to penny in a small metal box in the room. He talked English only, refusing to speak Yiddish, even with his wife. After Christmas he worked in a slaughterhouse for six weeks, skinning beef, soaking his hands in hot water every night until there was fresh skin from the wrists to the fingertips. In February he had three hundred dollars.

He learned that the best place to cross into America was west, in Saskatchewan. Most of the Jews ran to Niagara Falls, where there was an army of border guards. Lev Simon knew one fact about Jews: wherever they went, they made their ghetto. If one hundred of them were to die and the one hundred and first was a half mile away and safe, he'd be afraid there alone and come to die with the others.

He bought a map and drew a line from Saskatchewan to St. Paul, to Ben Baratz and Ruth, his wife's sister, and he told Sarah they were going.

His son Joe was only two years old then, and they rode a day and a night across Canada in a cattle train with one coach car, the three of them in one seat. Simon wore a thin coat, double-breasted and ill-fitting. He had the money in his suit and in his right-hand coat pocket a .38 automatic he'd bought in Quebec. The gun was wrapped in a silk scarf and his hand was always around it. He could feel the steel when he scratched at the silk and pushed it away from the gun. When he went to the toilet he took his son from Sarah, carrying the child on his left arm and the right hand over the scarf, walking easily down the aisle and

feeling the Canadians watching him; thinking always there was a government official among the farmers and the salesmen and certain they wouldn't hurt a baby.

That much he knew and believed, not letting himself think otherwise: they wouldn't hurt his son. He'd written a note in Yiddish, putting it in an envelope and pinning it inside the child's cap, writing Joe's name, age, and the names and addresses of the relatives in St. Paul. He figured himself, and maybe Sarah, all right, perhaps the two of them were goners, but somehow, with this new world, they didn't kill babies; that was the difference in his mind between Europe and North America: they didn't hurt children.

He let Sarah sleep. Joe slept most of the time. He sat through the night listening to the snores of the men around him. Once the conductor came through and, seeing Lev awake, beckoned him to follow.

They recognized me, Lev thought. They saw it on me, I'm trying to cross the border; up ahead sit the police. They can only send me back to Quebec, he thought. But the gun, he thought, and while the conductor waited, Lev took his coat off and tucked it around his son and around his wife, pushing the pocket down between Sarah and the wall.

The conductor took him through three cars, walking ahead of him, and Lev thought what a fool the conductor was. To walk ahead like that. Lev could drop him easily and be off the train. Before the conductor came around, the train would be twenty miles gone. Lev didn't like uniforms; he figured it was the same here as Europe, the uniform was right. No matter what species of vermin wore it, you were a loser against the uniform.

But in the fourth car there was a potbellied stove and Lev smelled the coffee when he stepped through. There was a strong light hanging over the stove, and the engineer and the fireman were sitting around it. One of them hooked a chair with his feet

and pulled it over for Simon. The conductor motioned him to sit and he poured some coffee and one of them—Lev never remembered which man—got a bottle out of his pocket, held it out, his face questioning, and Lev nodded. What he remembered always was that the man gave *him* the bottle to pour, didn't pour it himself. Lev Simon was very careful when he poured.

He drank just a little out of the cup. Then he poured the whisky. He wanted to empty half the cup of coffee and fill it with whisky.

He hadn't been eating much those days, and that shot, maybe two fingers, he felt it straight through him and up and down.

The men had a whole salami there, and bread, and they asked Lev if he wanted some. He said no, figuring not to be a pig with these men; all he wanted was to get off the train safe.

But the conductor was smart. The conductor made two sandwiches for Lev and watched him eat. He made two more and told Lev to take them back for his wife. He asked about the baby and was told they had plenty of milk and oranges.

Lev sat with them until dawn, going back twice to see his wife and son and feeling for the gun. The town was asleep when the train stopped. Lev carried his son off the train, wearing the overcoat now. They sat in the station until eight o'clock, and then he made a tour of the town and found a hotel: eight rooms over a saloon.

They were sixteen miles from the border now and one hundred and fifty miles from the nearest legal port of entry and border patrolmen. There was a bed in the room, a washstand, a chair. The window looked out over the main street. Sarah would not leave the room, and Lev went out and to the diner down the street for coffee and sandwiches. Later he went downstairs and into the saloon. He was wearing the coat and he could feel the gun. He stood up to the bar, and the man behind it let

him stand there for fifteen minutes until the saloon had cleared. Lev figured then the news of his arrival had spread.

He didn't know anything about the town. He didn't know who was cop and who was crook. He didn't know who might arrest him or who might kill him, but he knew he'd find out in the saloon, one way or the other.

"I figure from here we go to America or we go to jail, and I learn quick which way I'm moving," he told his wife later.

"Sit there in the hotel and afraid to sleep?" he told his wife.

"If I have to be afraid, then all at once . . ."

"You," the bartender said when the room was empty, "what do you drink?"

Lev looked at him. Saw the man, saw how big he was: his arms and his neck and his chest, and Lev let his thumb touch the coat pocket, just so he could feel the gun.

"What do you want, man?" the bartender asked. "Can't you talk, man?"

Lev Simon looked around the saloon. It was empty now, all right. He looked at the door and saw nobody coming. He saw nobody on the street, nobody walking, nobody looking in, and he put his hands up on the bar. He held the bar with each hand, his arms maybe two feet apart, all the fingers on the wood, and he looked at the bartender. He could hear the bartender breathing and he could feel himself breathing, could feel the breath pushing out, could feel his stomach quivering, and he wanted to throw up. He wanted to sit down or back off from the bar and run. He could feel his legs going, and the right leg began to quiver, the calf fluttering, and he couldn't hold the leg still. He could feel the phlegm forming at the back of his mouth and he could feel his neck aching, and far down, just above the bowels, there was a clear, cold ache and he wanted some whisky. Just one shot to keep him warm, and he swallowed once and again.

"America," he said.

The man watched him across the bar, and when his hand went to his shirt pocket for a cigarette, Lev took his right arm from the counter and slipped it into the coat pocket and he pushed the shawl free of the gun. He got his hand on the gun and found the trigger with his forefinger and he said to himself:

Be a man, mister. Please be a man. Please behave, mister, don't make trouble for me now. I have no room this morning for more trouble. I don't want to use the gun, mister. Please be a man, say yes or no quick, but no trouble. Don't force me to lift the gun and then they'll take Joe away to live with relatives, you big nose, mister; where did you get such a big nose? And the wart on our neck, don't you realize I'll put a bullet through the wart on your neck? I'll kill you and your wife will cry, mister. How many children have you got? God, but my balls are cold. Please, mister, be careful what you say. Be a man. Don't move now, don't look for police, don't turn your head one way or another way, or you are without a head. For God's sake, mister, I'm not going back again, Quebec or Antwerp or Odessa, five thousand miles is too far now, mister, are your balls as cold as mine, are they . . .

"Five hundred dollars," the man said.

Lev Simon could not see whether the bartender's lips moved, but he heard the five hundred and he saw the man's hand raise, the five fingers spread, and Lev thought for an instant he would fill his pants.

He took his hand out of the coat and put it on the counter.

"Whisky," Lev said, and he smiled at the man, feeling his lips pulling apart, his mouth full and his throat full. He got the whisky, drank it neat, got another, and played with it for a minute, tasting it and rolling it around in his mouth, letting it rinse his mouth.

"Three of us," Lev said. "Wife and baby and me. How do we go?"

The bartender watched him and then jerked his head and Lev

followed to the far end of the bar. The man came around and stood at the L of the bar. Lev stopped far enough back so he could see the man completely.

"How?" Lev asked.

"Horse and wagon," the bartender said. "Tonight," he said. "After dark, about seven o'clock, behind the railroad station." He tapped the bar with his knuckles. "Five hundred," he said.

Lev had the whisky and he was all right now. This was no different from all border guards everywhere. You could do business with this big one here. He unbuttoned his coat and got the money out of his pocket. He found the gun again and then took the roll of bills and put it on the counter. He watched the bartender and he began counting, dividing the money into two stacks, dollar for dollar. He pushed one pile, folding it with his hand and stuffing it back into his pocket. The bartender said there was only one hundred and thirty dollars there and he began to protest.

"You're crazy," the bartender said.

Lev shrugged.

"I've got to pay the farmer," the man said. "It costs money for the farmer who drives you."

Lev watched him.

"Listen, man, you can't get into the States with this kind of money," and Lev noticed he held the bills.

"St. Paul," Lev said. "Minnesota. I need for Minnesota."

"I can't," the bartender complained.

Lev reached for it. "All right. I find someone in Canada."

The bartender counted it again and he said: "I'll need another twenty-five. At least twenty-five," he protested. Lev got the man's wrist, holding his wrist so the bartender couldn't move his arm. "I don't do business with you," Lev said. "I don't need you for this business," he said. "You want blood *and* money."

The man wrenched his arm free and stuffed the bills into his

trousers. "Seven o'clock," he said. "Behind the station. There's an old storage shed. Stand on the far side, away from the town. Driver's name is Karl. What's your name?" he asked.

"Any name," Lev said. "Pick a name for me, mister. What kind of name do you like for me?" The fear was coming out of him now, flowing away from him.

"I've got a feeling to forget about you."

"My friend, be a nice man. You don't get any more money if you're nice or if you're not nice."

"Well, what's your name then?"

"You — fool," Lev said. "You think I'll give you the real name? Maybe if the police come you forget about the horses and about your Karl and about my family. Pick me a name, mister," he said. "Pick me a 'Merican name and maybe I keep it if I like it. Come on, mister, baptize me now in this saloon."

"Tom. He'll ask for Tom."

They wrapped the boy in three blankets and Sarah was afraid he might not breathe. After dark Lev carried the suitcases down, leaving them against the shack. Then he went back for his wife and son.

You understand, this was old business for Lev Simon. He'd grown up with such business, stealing borders in the night, and there was nothing new with the commerce to follow but one fact: this was the *last* border. He was finished. One more and no further night work, no new basements, no hiding, no cringing, no lying and money left on tables or under cups or in caps. Sixteen miles and finished.

"Lev," Sarah said, sitting there on the suitcase.

"Tom, Sarah. Tom tonight."

"Tom." She was ashamed now. She should know now, this wasn't the first border, nor the first night. She should know now, she thought, to sit quietly and trust him and give him no further trouble.

"Tom," he said, and he laughed softly for her. "Remember you have a new husband tonight. New husband for this trip," and he laughed again and wondered if she'd be all right. There wasn't much he could give her this night; he had little to spare. He heard the horses then, and in an instant the wagon wheels. He stepped before Sarah, shielding her, and his hand went into his pocket.

The man, Karl, had a fine team. I want to see him, Lev thought. I want to look if he is as good as the horses.

The cart was a long, narrow wagon with high sides. The man sat on a thin, short seat, wearing a huge coat, a blanket over his knees and tucked up around his stomach. He stopped the wagon maybe twenty feet from the shed and came down, walking toward Lev, an old man with hip boots and a beard.

"Tom?" he asked. "Tom?"

"Karl," Lev said.

"In the back. I'll fix you up there." He helped with the suitcases. Lev saw there were several old, worn blankets and he helped Sarah up and then got his son. He put the blankets around them and then climbed up beside the driver. "I sit here," Lev said, his hand on the gun.

"And if we are stopped?"

"Then we are stopped."

"In the back," Karl said, and he motioned with the whip he held. He held the reins in the other hand and the horses were inching away from the shed, waiting for a command.

"In the back," Karl said again. "Quick, or you don't go at all."

Lev Simon wanted to spit in the old man's face. This old man who was the last thief to be bribed, the last guard to bow before. He held the seat with one hand and then, leaning over, whipped his cap from his head and slapped a horse on the rump and commanded it. The horses were off in a rush. The old man was thrown back on the seat, holding the horses, fighting for his seat

and control of the animals. They were out of the city before he was comfortable. The blanket slipped from his middle and from his leg. Lev moved closer to the old man and got his foot next to the old man's, tucking the blanket around him, leaving his pocket clear and his hand in his pocket.

"Now, Karl, behave," Lev said then. He wished then they were already in America so he could spit on this old man. He wished the old man was young so he would not have this pity for him that mixed with the resentment. The old man, Karl, had now become every border guard since Russia, and every petty official. The old man was now the passport stamper, the passport photographer who doubled his rates, the ship steward who brought down food to steerage for a price. He was the police and the Canadian Mounted, tall and fierce and all of them well-fed-looking. The old man was in danger here with Simon, who was sick of his fear.

"Now you drive, Karl," Lev said. "And you drive for America, you understand? You are too old for tricks, Karl. You are too old for games with poor people, and don't think there is a hundred dollars more if you go another way to the police. You are paid and the horses are fed. Now you move, Karl, and quick, before my son is in the cold too long."

He left the seat and knelt before Sarah and the child. He held her face in his hands and he talked softly to her and gently. "Now," he said. "Soon."

"Yes."

"Soon now, Sarah. Two hours or three."

"Yes."

He kissed her cheek. "We are all right now, *tiers*, dearest," he said.

"Yes, Lev."

He grinned in the darkness. "Tom."

"I love you," she said.

suitcase and he held her hand and clutched the boy to him with the other arm.

"Here you are, Joe," Lev said. "Here is the land for you," he said. "Here you will be a man, Joe, and here you will grow. I'll find you a field here and a house and a bedroom."

"Over," said Karl.

"What?"

"Over. There. At the road there. You see the stone there by the road? America."

Then Lev held the boy and wept. Not until then, ever. Not in the army, never there, although he had seen them all weep, plenty of officers among them. Not during pogroms, nor when he left Odessa that time, a deserter. Not when he was to be married, not when they crossed borders, not when the first two sons were stillborn, not in the stink of the hold of the ship, not in Quebec when the skin peeled and his hands were on fire. Not then and not this last afternoon when he was shaking before the bartender.

Now—in America—he wept.

Ai-yai-yai-yai, Joe thought, using his father's phrase, look at him. My Christ, look at his face. Like the dough Ma rolled for bread. He set the coffee cup and saucer carefully on the floor.

"How'd you sleep?" Joe asked. He's scared, Joe thought. I can see it on him how scared he is.

"Slept," Lev Simon said. "Sleep a little, wake a little. You know." He raised one hand on the quilt, turning it, palm up, in a hopeless gesture.

Joe got out of the chair at the foot of the bed and came around to his father's side. How do I keep smiling for this man? he thought. How do you keep lying to him and who are we trying to fool? How do you fool your father who knows whatever there is to know of you, everything; inside and out, all the bad and whatever good? Joe squatted at the bed, reached out, and got his father's hand. The skin was dry and the flesh loose on the bones.

Just so he doesn't know it, Joe thought.

"Hello, Champ," Joe said.

Lev was high in the bed; two thick pillows behind him. "Joe," he said, smiling.

"How's my old man?"

"Still pitches."

Joe dropped the hand on the quilt, stood up in mock disgust, leaning against the window. "Still swinging. Can't you remember? Still swinging is the way it goes."

Lev smiled. "Beg pardon?"

Joe shook his head. "Foreigner."

"Not me."

"Greenhorn," said Joe. He grinned now.

"Not me."

"You're an alien, Simon. Simon, you're a greenhorn."

"You lie, mister."

"We're going to deport you, Simon. Back to Russia for you, Lev, old boy."

Lev shook his head. "I'm citizen," he said.

"How do you know?" Joe was holding the laughter now, his lips working to keep from laughing. His arm came up, finger pointing at his father. "How do you know. Simon?"

"Got the papers. Got citizen papers there in safe box deposit."

Now Joe laughed. His arms dropped to his sides, his head went back against the window glass, and he couldn't hold it any more. "Safe box deposit. Safe-*deposit* box. Can't you say safe-*deposit* box?"

"All right. Safe-*deposit* box. You happy now, Mr. Reporter?" Lev grinned at his son. "I sure don't make a living from Aingilsh, eh, Joe?"

"You sure don't." Joe pulled a chair to the side of the bed. "Maybe I ought to get out of here and leave you alone. Get some rest."

"Ah—sick and tired from this bed, Joe. You don't believe me, Joe, I'm sore all over from laying here in this bed."

"That's the cure, Pa."

"Yeah . . . cure . . . Say, Joe, fill up with ice water, please." He pointed at the pitcher on the night table.

Joe got the ice cubes from the refrigerator, dropped them into the pitcher, and filled it with water.

It isn't even Pa, he thought.

That man with the skin dead, the hands white, the two-day gray beard, the blob of red high on each cheek, the fingers trembling slightly, that's not Pa.

At least he doesn't know, Joe thought.

He walked back into the bedroom and set the pitcher on the night table. Joe felt for cigarettes in his pocket. "I'm going into the living room to smoke," he said.

"Smoke here."

"It'll bother——"

"Ah—big difference if you smoke or not. Long time since I talk with my oldest."

"All right," Joe said. "You know who I was thinking of on the plane coming out?"

"Nu?"

"Ben Baratz. There was a guy sitting up front, and from the back he looked just like Baratz."

"Yes," Lev said.

"That sonofabitch."

"Your uncle," Lev said.

"No uncle of mine."

"Ma's sister's husband," Lev said.

"She can have him."

"You know, Joe, he wanted to come see me here."

"You're fooling."

"Honest and true, Joe. Ruth called Ma, says maybe they come to see me."

"What'd Ma say?"

"Said I'm pretty tired fellow and doctors think better no visitors."

"Too bad Marty wasn't here to answer the phone."

Lev smiled at the prospect. "That red one." Then: "Give a cigarette, Joe," he said.

"A cigarette! Are you crazy?"

"Ah . . ." Lev Simon was impatient. He moved his arm, fingers out toward Joe. "Give a cigarette, mister, I don't smoke him."

"You don't smoke——"

"Give." Lev Simon took one from the pack his son offered, held it lengthwise between thumb and forefinger. He tapped one end with his forefinger and then he put it carefully to his lips, letting it hang from his mouth in hoodlum fashion. "See, kid, I don't smoke him."

"I don't understand you," Joe said. "Why hold the cigarette if you can't smoke it?"

Lev nodded reflectively. "You are still a baby," he said. "What kind newspaperman are you, please, Joe, if you don't know nothing?"

"Will you, for Christ's sake——"

"Mister"—Lev gestured with the cigarette in his hand—"mister, listen to me. You saw maybe in your life an old man on the street? Maybe this old man is seventy, eighty, *ninety* years old. Sick is this old man, and tired. Middle of summer and he is cold and wears overcoat and shakes a little bit. But if a woman is on the street and she has pretty good legs and upstairs has two good windows and she is *zaftig*, then this old man who maybe dies tomorrow or tonight, this old man looks at the woman and he watches the legs and the upstairs."

"So . . ."

"He looks on this woman. He is no good for *twenty* years already. But he has the pleasure to look and the pleasure to remember. One time he don't look. One time he did something, all right, and no difference if fifty years ago, he remembers."

As long as he talks that way, Joe thought.

"So you hold the cigarette," Joe said.

"Certain."

"You're a philosopher."

"No philosopher."

"Spinoza, that's who you are."

"Who's he, Spinoza?"

"A Dutch philosopher. He was a Spaniard, and when they chased the Jews out of Spain he went to Holland."

"Jew, huh?" Lev asked, and he nodded.

"Sure."

"And they chase him, huh?"

"They sure did."

Lev nodded once more. "Jew with brains." He touched his forehead. "A Jew is bad enough. But a Jew with brains, this they cannot stand."

"Not here."

"No, you're right. This is one, *last* place, all right."

"You said it."

"Say, Joe," Lev said, "what time Hub's train supposed to come in?"

"Noon."

"Marty went to pick him up, huh?"

"I guess so. I was shaving. You know that Marty. Anything to get out of the house."

"Well. He's working pretty hard there in college."

"That's a good school, that Northwestern," Joe said.

"I don't worry about the school. I worry about him."

"He's a hothead, all right."

"Too hot," Lev said. "My doctor. Wants to punch everybody, my doctor."

"He'll be all right."

"Hope so. Joe, what time is it?"

"About a quarter of ten. Why?"

"Go and see if Ma is in the yard."

"She's in the yard."

"Go see, Joe. Please."

"What's the matter, Lev? You think she's got some guy out there?"

"Yes. Guy. Go, Joe."

Joe walked into the kitchen to the window beyond the refrigerator. He saw his mother hanging the clothes with the maid. He came back into the bedroom nodding. "She's there."

"Close the door here, Joe."

"What's the matter? What's going on now?"

"Joe."

He closed the door and stood at the foot of the bed, looking at his father. "What's the matter?" Joe asked.

Lev gestured with his arm. "Here, you help me, Joe."

"Help you what?"

"Please, Joe, don't argument with me. Come help me now. Push me ap a little bit."

"Pa, lie still."

"Don't argument, Joe. Please." He gestured for his son once more.

Joe came around to the side of the bed, and as he bent over his father Lev Simon put his arms about his son. Then, slowly, he began to push himself up against the pillows; slowly, slowly, and Joe could hear him breathing, could hear him sucking air in great gobs. At last Lev was almost sitting in the bed, and when Joe straightened up his father was breathing quickly and audibly.

Lev pointed at the closet. "Bring me my box, Joe. The key is there."

Joe went to the closet, reached up on the shelf for the green strongbox. When he turned to the bed his father was smoothing the quilt beside him. "Sit, Joe. Sit, please."

Joe sat on the edge of the bed. His father took the green metal strongbox, set it on his lap, and opened it.

"Ma's outside?" Lev asked again.

"Yeah."

Lev was fingering through the papers in the box and he watched the box as he spoke. "Joe, maybe we don't have much chance to talk," he said.

"We've got plenty chances to talk," Joe said. "What is this?" he asked, and he reached for the box, but his father's fingers were on Joe's wrist and pushing his hand from the metal.

"Here is the key to the safe-deposit box," Lev said. "Listen, Joe"—looking at the papers and the box—"Joe, 'tween me and you. 'Tween me and you, Joe."

"All right, Pa."

"You my oldest," Lev said. He held an insurance policy.

"I know, Pa."

"No secrets 'tween me and you, Joe."

"No."

"You know, Joe. You the oldest. I don't fool you much and you for sure don't fool me."

"I know, Pa."

Watching the box: "Joe, have to tell you some things, explain some things here to you."

"You don't have to do that now, Pa." Joe was rubbing his father's arm. "Why now, Pa?"

"No, Joe." He moved his arm aside and held the box with his hands.

He turned once to look at his son and he put his hand on his son's head and let his fingers stroke Joe's hair.

Then he closed the box and clasped his hands and he turned away from Joe and looked at the closed door.

"Has to be now, Joe.

You understand me. Joe, this time I think I die."

Joe watched Lev Simon, seeing the smile form on his father's face, seeing the eyes soft and warm, as though the older man remembered an infant son.

"What are you thinking of?" Joe asked. "What's the mystery?" Joe asked, knowing now the most terrible secret of all.

"Baratz," Lev said. "I remember Baratz now."

"Baratz," Joe said, and the hopeless fury took him then. "That one," Joe said, and wanted Baratz here this instant. Wanted to hold Baratz and force his uncle to look at Lev Simon. Wanted Baratz in the bed; that one deserved to die. "How can you think of him and smile?"

"If I cry, Joe? Better if I cry now?"

"Why mention him?" Joe asked. "Why bring his name into this room?"

"Tell the truth," Lev said, "I don't think much from Baratz. I think 'stead how we come to this America, you 'n' Ma 'n' me."

Joe felt the anger go then. "Yes," and he smiled. "Yes"—he smiled—"you told me. I'll remember that, all right."

Lev Simon raised his arm, gesturing with his hand. "Think how we come here, you see, Joe, and then I think from Baratz. That first time, when he calls from North Dakota."

Joe nodded.

"You don't remember. You're a baby. I told you, that's how you remember."

"I was about five years old, certainly I remember."

"Maybe three years," Lev said. "We're a year here safe in this America. I remember Hub is a baby then. Had that much safe till this night. . . ."

On that Sunday at dusk Ben Baratz had fourteen dollars left of the hundred when he walked away from the craps game in Lower Hook far up in the northwest corner of North Dakota. He left the group there around the stove in the freight agent's shack, his hands in his pockets, feeling the few bills against his fingers, walking to the Dodge sedan parked near the grain elevator. The wind was raw on this March evening, and he wanted only to get out of the town and back to Middle Village, the county seat.

He'd buy cattle now, all right. What kind of cattle could he buy now, when he didn't even have money for a binder? What could he do now with fourteen dollars in his pocket? Two days up here and not a cow bought; not a heifer; not a dollar made.

In the car he backed away from the grain elevator, turning up the single street of the town toward Middle Village, shivering in his whipcord jacket as he waited for the heater to warm.

He didn't know yet, as he drove, just what he would do, how

he would get money, but cursing himself now. He cursed himself aloud unwittingly, speaking in cadence with the slow-moving windshield wipers which kept the light snow from his vision. He didn't hear the roar of the heater and he didn't hear the click-click-click of the wipers.

"Even to lose with dice," he said aloud. "With dice to lose. Who is lower than me? Name me one," he challenged himself, "who is lower than me, *Nischosnik*, unfortunate. What else am I? What else am I, and is anything I touch good? Is any lousy, *Nischosnik*, small deal, any business, any transaction, anything; is it ever worth but trouble for me? But failure for me? Have I had one decent day?" he said aloud. "Have I had one good thing, one? What has happened good to me since I was born? What is this world for me but unhappiness and misery and trouble, and what kind of breaks have I had?"

The tires struck an icy path, the water frozen after the thaw, and the car swerved to the right, to the narrow shoulder toward the gully beyond. Ben Baratz jerked the wheel violently, pulling toward the road, righting the machine at last, and then stopping there on the deserted highway.

"Nearly killed," he said. He struck a match and held it for an instant, watching the warmth of the flame before bringing it to his unlit cigar.

"Another minute," he said, and he snapped his fingers. "I'm dead," he said, "in one second," and he could see himself now in the road, the car on its side, himself dead behind the wheel; glass broken and steam coming from the radiator. He saw his wife. He saw his daughters weeping and then he dragged deep on his cigar.

"Could lay here freezing," he said. "Who cares? Somebody cares for me, I guess not. Somebody thinks of Ben Baratz, I guess not."

He shifted gears slowly, moving the car ahead cautiously now,

and felt himself in terrible danger. The road ahead was treacherous, he felt, and at his sides, on his right side and on his left side, was danger. He was all alone now, he felt, beset by horrible enemies, and he could not see the snow, nor the road, really, nor the countryside; nor did he remember now, actually, at that moment, where he was; the money gone; the day lost.

He drove thus into Middle Village, fighting off his enemies, and stopped before the hotel. Then he shifted gears again; he didn't want Andy Leonard, the hotel owner, fooling with his car.

Ben Baratz was hungry and he wanted food now as he parked at an angle next to the movie house. He could use a meal all right, Ben thought, and he went into the restaurant and sat at the counter. He'd been awake for three days, the way he felt. He shook hands with Michaels, the owner, who came over from behind the cigarette counter, leaving the *Fargo Forum* open at the market page. They talked for a minute as the waitress stopped before Ben.

"Yeah?" she said.

Ben rubbed his hands together, the diamond on his finger glowing in the light from the single bulb. The waitress watched the diamond, a big-breasted, dirty blonde.

"Yeah?" she said.

"Yeah, what?" Ben asked. "Yeah, what, hoaney?" he asked.

"What ya gonna eat, that's what," she said, and she giggled, couldn't get her eyes from the ring.

"Well," he said, "listen," and he put his elbows on the counter, put one hand over the other, the diamond-ringed hand on top. "Listen," he said, "I'll take a little piece from you," he said.

She moved her arm, the hand waving at him, and then dropping down over his hand, her little finger brushing the ring. "Yeah?" she said. "I come high, Daddy," she said.

"Not too high," Ben said, and Michaels didn't hear, wasn't listening. Ben felt his throat filling, and he forgot Michaels, forgot

his wife, Ruth, forgot the cattle, forgot the craps game. "Not for me too high, hoaney," he said, and he caught her hand and put it over one of his, and his other hand atop hers. "You make me now a small steak, a tenderloin and no fat. Make me French fried and mushrooms, and fresh coffee, not slop from this morning, and then later we talk how high you come," he said.

She was walking from him as she moved down the counter, her head high, and her legs and thighs together as she went for the steak. Big behind, Ben thought, and solid behind, and he saw her stripped down and waiting for him, with the big thighs he loved so well always, and the big hands to hold him, pulling him in, pulling him in and in and in, and around his ribs, pulling and pulling . . . and he couldn't breathe now.

He lay the cigar down carefully on the edge of the counter, his next to last cigar, and he waited for the steak. When she brought his food she looked him over once, undressed him right there; he could feel her hands on his body, moving over his skin, she looking down at him and her hair over her eyes and on his face. For a moment they were as close together as he had ever been with a woman, her eyes holding him while they tore at each other, and then she walked away from him.

She'd broiled it in butter. That wasn't on the menu, and while he ate he thought finally of what to do for money. Now with his belly filling and the night with this one ahead, now he could give time to money.

He dropped catsup on the plate and he soaked the steak in it. He asked for more toast, not dark, but light, golden, just bronze toast, and let it sit in the oven a minute so the butter soaks in, and with this he mopped the plate dry. He had her take the plate then and he sat sipping the coffee, just wetting his lips, lighting the cigar quickly, puffing hard and fast so the dry, leathery taste would escape. Not even a fresh one, he thought, for he would not

permit himself the luxury of his last cigar, and he would not smoke the ropes here in Middle Village.

She dropped the check before him, a square sheet of green paper, and he caught her hand and held it while he reached in his pocket and got a dollar and closed her fingers over it.

"Nine o'clock," he said, and she winked at him.

"Not tonight, Daddy," she said.

"Sure tonight."

She shook her head slowly. She was standing before him, shaking her head, and he knew her legs were spread wide, he *knew* it. She was smiling, and he could see the tits.

"Got a date, Daddy."

"Break it," he whispered. "For God's sake, hoaney, break it. Break it!"

She winked again. "Tomorrow, Daddy," and she moved away. "Tomorrow night, sugar."

He slid off the stool, wanting her now so bad that he couldn't move, standing against the counter for a minute. It was a \$1.90 check, and he walked to Michaels with it, his hand holding the thirteen dollars he had left. Michaels looked up from the paper and reached for the check.

"One flop, Mike," Ben Baratz said. "Double or nothing, one flop."

"You pay stand off," Michaels said.

"All right, robber, one flop."

Michaels reached for the dice box and covered it with his hand. Ben said "Shake. Go ahead, shake already."

"I got guts," Michaels said, and the dice came out, a five and a six, two fours and an ace. "Three fours," he said, and Ben scooped the dice, dropped them into the circular box, and blew on them. He wrapped the glass top of the counter twice and with his other hand he crumpled the check and dropped it on the floor. "You're a goner, Mike," he said.

"Sure," Michaels said. "Shake."

Ben let them roll wide. He had two threes, a deuce, a four, and a six, and Michaels scooped up the dice, put the box behind him as he watched Baratz, and he said: "Three-eighty, gambler."

Baratz threw a five on the counter, got his change, and thrust it into his pocket. He didn't look back at the blonde whom he needed very much now, and he didn't look at Michaels.

Tomorrow night, she said. Do I need her tomorrow night? Who needs that *kurve*, whore? Who wants that big, fat slop? Who needs this kind of a life, alone here in the wilderness.

He walked toward the hotel and then, before the lighted entrance to the theater, stood a moment before a poster, looking at Vilma Banky in black tights and white blouse, in high-heeled shoes and black stockings running to her hips.

A man in a Russian blouse and velvet trousers stood behind Miss Banky, his head at her head and his lips at her ear. He held her hands and Miss Banky's eyes were closed.

There, thought Ben Baratz, there is a *shtik*, piece. There is the one for me, he thought, and he winked at Miss Banky and he whispered in Yiddish to Miss Banky, who, had she heard the words, would have needed no knowledge of the language to strike him. The figure in the Russian blouse wasn't present now; there was only Miss Banky and Ben Baratz, still whispering in Yiddish, offering the advantages of Room 214 of the Hotel Sioux down the block.

Ben Baratz touched the brim of his Stetson to Miss Banky, the rendezvous agreed upon, and as he dropped his hand the wind caught the hat and sent it down the walk. He watched it for an instant, his conquest shattered, and then saw the pearl-gray hat twirling like a wheel on its brim, being pushed at last into a doorway three stores down from the theater.

He heard a man laughing behind him and, like the hero of the Western movie he'd seen last night, Ben Baratz wanted to turn

now and walk slowly toward the man, slowly and carefully remove the gloves he wore, slap the man's face once and again, smiling at the man, but Ben Baratz moved quickly for his hat.

"Brand-new hat," he said aloud. "Three weeks old," he said, and as he bent in the doorway to retrieve the Stetson he wanted to step on the hat, lift both feet and stamp on the hat, smash it, get the felt in his hands and tear it apart. He wanted to throw the hat into the street and watch a car grind it into the dirty, hard-packed snow. He was filled with impotent rage at the sudden gust of wind which had soiled the twenty-five-dollar Stetson and he wanted to finish the job, do it right. The farmer out there beyond Black Lake on the southern tip of the county, who wanted a hundred-dollar binder on the load of cattle; the craps game, what had he thought of to get into the craps game here this afternoon? He must have been crazy to get into that game. A hundred dollars in his pocket and go for eighty-five of it in a craps game. With farmers! *Farmers!*

Now the hat. As he squatted before the Stetson he remembered the movie hero, the cowboy at the hitching post before the saloon, his back to the door, his hands untying the reins, and then, in one fluid motion, twirling, both guns out and blazing. Ben Baratz wanted to turn on his haunches and pour lead into the offender before the theater, but he lifted the hat at the crown, not wanting to dirty the pigskin gloves. He held it thus as he walked down the block to the corner where a path had been worn across the street so that he would not dirty his shoes in the old snow and soot. He crossed there and came up to the hotel, holding the hat, his head down and turned away from the wind so that his hair would not be mussed.

Ben Baratz set the hat down, brim up, on a worn mohair chair in the small lobby and pulled off his gloves. Looking at the dirty, wet underside of the brim, he reached into his back trousers pocket for a comb. His hair was black and full, well oiled,

the sideburns turning gray. Watching the hat, he combed his hair carefully, his hand coming back over his head as he finished each stroke.

"Accident, Benny?" Andy Leonard, the owner, came out from behind the desk to stand now beside Ben Baratz.

"The wind." Ben Baratz stuffed the gloves into a pocket of the gabardine jacket he wore and then unzipped it. "Dirty wind," he said.

"A shame." Andy Leonard stood with his hands pushed into his back pockets.

"Cost me twenty-five bucks, the hat. Three weeks ago."

"Shame."

"Ah . . ." Ben Baratz got his handkerchief out, bent to wipe the hat, and then stopped. "Got a towel, Andy?"

Leonard pointed to the handkerchief. "What's the matter with that?"

"Silk. Don't want to dirty the silk, Andy."

"Use it."

"Andy, come on."

"You got towels in your room," Leonard said. "Use them."

Ben Baratz looked at Andy Leonard. You'll get business from me, he thought. All right, *chazer*, pig, he thought, you and me are through. A towel. A lousy towel, you *chazer*. After ten years, and you say no for a towel. That's what you can expect. Ten years I stay here and what does he care about it?

Ben Baratz picked up the hat, feeling the wet dirt on his hands. "Remember," he warned.

Leonard laughed. He had big ears and hair parted in the middle, a thin, very tall man with big hands and huge knuckles. "I'll remember, he said. "Like with the thirty-two bucks you still owe me."

"You'll get it," Baratz said. "I suppose you lost money on me in ten years."

"Ben, I'm going to let you in on something." Leonard stood over him and his forefinger came up against Ben Baratz's jacket. He was smiling now as he spoke. "A tip for you, Ben: I don't want your business. Two bucks for a room and hustle every broad in town up there. I don't mind an occasional screw, Benny, but if I want to run a whore house, I'll put a red light out in front. I don't need you to run a whore house for me, Benny."

"You'll see me here again," Ben Baratz warned.

Leonard left him, going around behind the desk. Baratz stuffed his handkerchief into his pocket and walked toward Leonard. He set the hat down beside a whole green blotter, took the last cigar from his pocket, and bit off the end. He grinned at Leonard, reached over to take the cigarette from the hotel man's fingers, and lit his cigar.

"Sorehead," he said.

"Not me. Me?" Leonard said. "I love everybody."

"Not even your mother," Baratz said.

"Never had a mother. I'm a whore-house bastard, Benny."

Baratz pointed at the other man. "No big job to find your father. Look for those ears."

"That ain't all that's big," Leonard said.

Ben Baratz grinned. "Champeen, huh?"

"Don't bet against me."

All right, Ben Baratz thought. All right, he's not mad now, the trouble is over now. "Say, Andy."

Leonard waved the cigarette. "Go ahead. Go get her and take her upstairs. Don't you ever slow down?"

"Ah . . . That's all you think of. Should run a house. Listen, Andy, I got something good, money and fast."

"Oh?"

"Fast, Andy." Ben Baratz snapped his fingers. "Monday or Tuesday the latest. Maybe Monday night yet."

"Yeah." Leonard stood against the wall, his hands flat against

the wood at his sides, his head cocked as the smoke drifted up from the cigarette between his lips.

"Andy, I should hope to see my wife and my kids."

"Oh?" Leonard shifted the cigarette with his tongue.

"I got a carload of cattle spotted, Andy."

Leonard removed the cigarette, holding it for an instant between thumb and forefinger before dropping it and stepping on the butt. "Beat it," he said.

"Andy . . ."

"Beat it, Benny."

"You don't know even what I got," Ben Baratz said.

"I know what you ain't got. You ain't got money," Leonard said.

"Andy . . ."

"And money's one thing you ain't getting from me."

"Why don't you hear me at least?"

"I hear you, Ben."

Ben Baratz held the desk with both hands, and Leonard saw the streak of mud on the tips of his fingers and the smudge over the polished fingernails. "Andy . . ."

"Benny, be thankful I don't ask for the deuce in advance."

"You sonofabitch."

Leonard nodded. "From you, yes. It don't mean anything from you."

"You sonofabitch."

"Yes," Leonard said. "Yes." He nodded. "I can take it from you because you're not worth the sweat to come over and kick your ass."

"I'll stay here again," Baratz said. "I'm just praying you hold your breath till you see me again."

"Go on to sleep, Benny," Leonard said. He leaned over the desk, his elbows together, his hands clasped, looking at Baratz. "Go to sleep, Benny."

"Go to hell."

Leonard pursed his lips, his face grotesque. He touched his lips with his fingers and blew a kiss at Baratz. "Sweet dreams, Benny."

"Ah . . ." Baratz got his hat and started for the stairs.

"Hey, Benny!"

Ben Baratz turned, one hand holding the rail.

"Tom Wee and Hansen, the doctor, are up in 320, the bridal suite. They got brides."

"Ah . . ."

"Why don't you go up?"

"Ah . . ."

"I'll be up later, sweetheart. We'll see who's champ, Benny. Are you a champ?"

That's who I need, Ben Baratz thought, the doctor to needle at me. This one here and then the doctor. Hell with them, he thought, starting up the stairs. Another twenty bucks for booze up there. I can't go up there, he thought. I'm too smart. Eighty-five dollars in a craps game, all right, but spend twenty to enjoy an evening, not me. Not a stupid *kopf* like me.

"I know what you're the champ of, Benny," Leonard said. He was standing at the foot of the stairs now, looking up at Baratz.

"You're the champ of the deadbeats, Benny," Leonard said, grinning up at him.

"Sweetheart," Leonard said. "Sleep tight, sweetheart."

The Stetson crumpled in Ben Baratz's hands. Oy, if I had the money, he thought. Pay that one his thirty-two dollars and get my suitcase out of here. Tonight out of here, if I had to sleep in the car. I should have slept in Fargo. What did I need here, anyway?

All right, tonight and that's all. God should strike me dead here, right here on this spot, if he sees me again. He stumbled then on the second flight of stairs, his short body going forward, his hands out before him. He sprawled on the stairs,

feeling the dust of the aged rug on his face and in his mouth. He sneezed and sneezed again. Struggling to rise, he caught his ankle on a stair, feeling the shoe come free of his heel. He turned and sat on the rug, one leg over the other to get the shoe on his foot once more, and he was trembling now and wanted suddenly to weep.

Some life out here in this wilderness. Never with Ruth and the girls, and Ben Baratz tore at the shoelaces, pushing his foot into the shoe at last, and went up the stairs, the laces dragging along the floor. See my own kids maybe three times a month, he thought, and my wife. Some life out here in hotels, and the cooking. He had the key in his hand and, when he opened the door of his lighted room, flung the hat at the bed and then held the wall for support, lifted his leg, got his shoe off, and threw it at the wall. He saw the plaster fall where the shoe struck, saw the nick he had made in the wall. Always in hotels, Ben Baratz kept the light burning in a gesture of defiance. He thought that the rates were too high, and by this action he repaid the owners for their gouging.

He remembered then that he must call Ruth, tell his wife where he was, let her know he had driven safely through Minnesota and North Dakota. He was going to call yesterday in Fargo. He got his other shoe off, removed his jacket, and reached for the upright telephone.

"Yes, sweetheart," Leonard said.

"Say, Leonard, give me long distance," Ben Baratz said. He sat on the bed in his stockinged feet.

"Give you what?"

"Give me the operator, I want to call St. Paul."

"Get off that phone."

"You——"

"Get off that phone." Leonard hung up.

Ben Baratz juggled the receiver hook with his thumb until Leonard returned to the switchboard. "I told you, Benny."

"For God's sake——"

"You want to use long distance, come on down here. There's a pay phone in the lobby."

"For God's sake——"

"No."

"Andy, it don't cost a cent." If he would drop dead. "Don't cost a cent, Andy."

"Not a cent. Three bucks."

"For God's sake, listen. Stay there on the line and listen," Ben Baratz pleaded. "Listen, then, and if it's a penny, cut me off."

"I live in this town——"

"Ah . . . Shut up and get the operator and listen," Ben Baratz said. "You don't have to be a rat altogether," he said.

"Do me a favor. From now on, check into the Village. It's a good hotel; he needs the business. Check in there." But Ben Baratz heard Leonard dialing for the operator.

"Your number, please?" the operator asked, and Ben Baratz wondered if she was the one he'd taken to dinner last month. "Number?" she asked.

"Long distance, operator," he said. "Person to person. Please get me Mr. Ben Baratz in St. Paul, Minnesota, number is Elkhurst 6544. 6544," he said.

"Will you spell the name, please?"

"Baratz, lady. Are you deaf, lady?"

"Will you spell the name, please?"

"B-a-r-a-t-z."

"Z as in zebra?"

"No, operator," Baratz heard Leonard. "Z as in donkey."

"Thank you. Just a moment, please."

He heard the phone being picked up in St. Paul and he heard Ruth say: "Hello. Yes? Hello. Yes, yes?" Thinks she's still in Russia, Ben Baratz thought. Even a phone is a new invention with her.

"Middle Village, North Dakota, is calling Mr. Ben Baratz," said the operator.

"Hello? Hello?"

"Middle Village is calling Mr. Ben Baratz. Is Mr. Baratz there, please?"

"Thank God," he heard Ruth say. "Thank God," and thought that he should have called yesterday from Fargo. Well, he wasn't kidnaped or killed. She didn't have to worry about him, nothing was going to happen to Ben Baratz.

"Hello," the operator said.

"You're a shrewd one," Andy Leonard said.

"Hello," said the operator. "Elkhurst 6544?"

"Yes," said Ruth. "Yes."

"Conniving little *goniff*," Andy Leonard said.

"Is Mr. Baratz there, please?"

"No," said Ruth. "No, he isn't here."

"When do you expect him?"

"I don't know," Ruth said. "Maybe later."

"Operator," said Ben Baratz. "Operator, cancel the call if he isn't there."

"Will you speak with anyone else, sir?"

"No. Cancel the call."

"I can try again in half an hour."

"Cancel the call," Ben Baratz said.

"Cancel it," Andy Leonard said. "Any charges, operator?"

"No charges."

Ben Baratz hung up then. He reached for the stub of the cigar, but it was dull and dead in his mouth and he dropped it on the ash tray. The phone rang.

"You're a cutie," Andy Leonard said.

Ben Baratz hung up.

He was loosening his tie when the phone rang.

"You're a lulu," Andy Leonard said.

He hung up again, and this time, standing in his stockings, pulling his trousers off, he let the phone ring until it was silent. He held the trousers at the cuffs, then in a single, deft movement let them double over his arm and carried them to the bureau. He slipped the cuffs into the drawer and shut it firmly so that the trousers hung down almost to the floor.

Still in his stockings, he unbuttoned his shirt and hung it in the closet. He hung his tie over the shirt, rebuttoning it so that the shape held. He took his hat from the bed and set it on a chair. He reached for the wine-colored rawhide bag at the foot of the bed, lifted it onto the chair near the bed, and opened it.

From it he took a pair of patent-leather bedroom slippers and, dropping them on the floor, pushed his feet into them. He took a pigskin toilet kit from the bag and carried it over to the washbasin.

For a long time he looked at himself in the mirror, pulling the skin down from his eyes, opening his mouth wide, and finally moving his legs apart and clenching his fists, his left arm out, his right at his chest, and his head down as he grimaced at himself in the mirror.

Now he stripped himself, dropping the silk shorts and top shirt on the floor. From the bag he took white silk pajama pants and got into those. He sat down, lifted one leg, took off the slipper, then the stocking, and replaced the slipper. He repeated the process.

At the washbasin he brushed his teeth carefully, massaging the gums with his finger and then brushing for almost five minutes. For another ten minutes he stood before the mirror, rubbing his hair and then combing it once again. He washed his face and neck and chest, soaping himself hard, and then he used both towels to dry himself and combed his hair once more.

He reached for the upper part of his pajamas and, sitting on the bed, took off the slippers and got his legs under the covers.

Do I even have to look at such a one as Leonard? he thought.
I'll fix Leonard.

The cattle. Nu, I'll get them someway. I'll make a deal. I'll get them, don't worry. The cattle I'll get.

How?

I'll get them.

Them upstairs. Bums upstairs.

Then he pushed himself up in the bed and pulled the light cord.

Why not? he thought, and felt his heart going.

That greenhorn, there with his greenhorn wife. Warm with his wife. Lived in my house, ate from my table, would he be something without me? Did he have someplace to come if not to me?

He reached for the phone and when Andy Leonard's son answered downstairs told him to ring the operator. He gave her careful instructions: he wanted Lev Simon, who lived at 130 Colorado Street in St. Paul, and the phone belonged to Nudelman. Reverse the charges.

"Lady," he said, "I don't know Nudelman's first name." He listened. "Yes, for God's sake, the charges reversed."

He held the phone, lying in the bed.

Let him help, the greenhorn.

He heard Lev Simon and the operator. He listened while his brother-in-law talked about the charges with Nudelman.

Then: "Ben? Ben?" In Yiddish: "What is, Ben? What happened? What is the matter with you there?" And Ben Baratz thought of his trouble.

"Shah, shah," he said. "Lev," he said, using Yiddish, "don't worry so much. I'm all right, *danken Gott*. I'm not hurt."

"What, Ben?"

So Baratz told him of being stopped on the deserted road, of being held up, of being forced to walk in the snow, and the car had been recovered an hour ago, but he didn't have a dollar, not a penny. He needed a hundred dollars immediately: Lev must wire to him here in the Hotel Sioux a hundred dollars.

"Ben, I don't have five dollars. I don't peddle, Ben, you know."

"Lev, take from Nudelman until Monday. From Nudelman until you can go to the loan there on Fourteenth Street."

"How, Ben? I live now from the loan association. I owe them now more than a hundred dollars."

"I'll pay Friday," Baratz said. "You can't wait until Friday?"

"You can't take there from somebody?" Lev asked.

"From who? From these farmers? Lev, for me, for your own *shwuger*, brother-in-law, who took you in *naket* and *burwes*, naked and barefoot?"

"Ben . . ."

"Naked and barefoot, and where could you go?" Ben Baratz asked, and he was terribly afraid now.

Lev Simon nodded.

"Lev. Lev, it's you?"

"All right, Ben," Lev Simon said. "All right."

He apologized to Nudelman and he led his wife upstairs. He could talk with Nudelman in the morning.

In the kitchen he told her about the robbery and she put her hands to her face.

"Who was robbed?" she asked in terror.

"Me," he said, "I was robbed."

"What are you talking?" she asked. "What do you mean, they robbed Ben? How? Ben. Where?"

He told her the story he had heard from Ben, and at last she had it straight. Then, while she prepared the tea, he went to the front door.

He turned the key slowly, took it from the door, and held it in his hand. He dropped the key on the table and walked to the door, pulled on it to see if it was locked.

It was locked, all right.

Some lock, he thought.

In my house, thought Lev Simon, and I must wait here in bed to greet my son. He heard Sarah and Joe in the living room with Marty and with Hub. He heard his wife cry out once as she came to Hub and he heard her weeping.

I must lay here, he thought. My house. I should be at the door. My car. *Me*. I should have driven in my car to get my son at the railroad station, he thought.

He wet his lips as he heard them coming. He moved his arm and smoothed his hair once. He heard them coming and he wiped his hands on the quilt, pulled his feet under the quilt.

Ai-yai, and there was Hub in the doorway, the handsomest of his sons.

"Pa," Hub said.

Lev pressed his lips together and he nodded.

"Pa."

Lev nodded once and again and he swallowed.

"Hello, Pa." Sarah moved past Hub and came to the bed. She sat on the edge of the bed and held her husband's hand.

"Herbert," Lev said. "*Kind*, child," he said. "Come to see Pa. Thanks. So far to see Pa. Thanks. I apologize I'm not there in the railroad station."

"Apologize," Hub said.

Lev Simon took his hand from his wife and he gestured at his legs. "Machinery gets old," he said.

"Not you," Hub said.

"Need a grease job on my machinery, maybe."

Hub moved into the room, and Joe and Marty leaned against the sides of the doorway. Hub's hands were in his pockets, the leather Air Corps jacket open. He went around to the other side of the bed and he stood above his father, nodding at his father, and then he dropped to his knees and took Lev Simon's hand and held it to his cheek.

He was twenty-six years old, and in his wallet was a picture of his year-old son, but he held Lev's hand and he bowed his head.

"Hey, Pa, look at Hub's hair," Marty said. "He's getting bald, Pa," Marty said, pointing.

Lev held Hub's chin and he raised his son's head now to look carefully at the full, thick, long black hair. "No bald," he said.

"He's losing it," Joe decided. "There, at the temple. How about it, Ma?"

Sarah rose and examined Hub's head carefully. "No," she said.

Hub sat at the edge of the bed, holding his father's hand in both of his. "How are you, Pa?" he asked.

"Little rest," Lev said. "That's all, Hub, honest. A little rest."

"Hub, you want something to eat?" Sarah asked.

"Well," Hub said, "I guess so."

Marty punched Joe's shoulder and then pointed at Hub. "What'll you bet he hasn't had breakfast? What'll you bet he was waiting to eat here? Hub, how cheap can you be?"

"Sharrap," Lev said. To Hub: "No breakfast, Hub, on the train?"

"I'm not paying those people a dollar for two eggs," Hub said.

"You wouldn't pay them a quarter for a whole chicken." Joe laughed.

"I'll make something," Sarah said.

"Cheap," Marty said. "Talk about cheap."

"You don't listen, Hub," Lev said. "Let them talk, two no-goods. Burns. Big shots, both."

"I don't care."

"Bums," Lev said. "He's father himself now. Has a son himself now. No millionaire."

"Pa, you should see him," Hub said.

"Good boy, huh?"

Hub smiled. "I can't tell you. I want to eat him up. You don't know."

"No." Lev grinned.

"That kid," Hub said. "My whole life. I got everything different in my life now, Pa."

"Sure. How's Helen?"

"You know. One room. A room for the three of us. You don't know how it is, Pa."

I don't know, Lev thought. "No," he said to Hub, "I don't know." Who knows if not me? he thought. Ai-yai, who lived like we lived that year? No air upstairs there that whole summer.

Ai-yai. . . .

Ben Baratz got him a job as a night watchman at Swift's in South St. Paul. Ben Baratz was a big-shot cattle buyer who traveled among the farmers in the Dakotas and traded with the commission houses in South St. Paul. Ben Baratz and his wife and two daughters lived in the white house on Winifred Street, and they got Lev Simon a room up under the eaves of a house down the block. Lev and his wife and Joe in the one room and a curtain drawn before the gas range and icebox.

Lev Simon worked at Swift's for two months, six nights a week, Mondays off. He left his wife every afternoon at four, with the two trolley tokens and the nickel for milk in his pocket, and the sack of Bull Durham, no money for tailor-mades, and the lunch with the thick binder over the newspaper covering.

Worked two months there for the hunky boss, leaving the house every afternoon at four until that Sunday afternoon when Lev was upstairs there in the room, and Sarah sat with Joe on

Ben Baratz's porch. Ben and his cattle-buyer cronies, all with the big cigars and the cream-colored Stetsons.

He'd have to pass Ben's house and kiss Sarah good-by, and the block seemed the longest he'd ever walked. All of them grinning at him, pointing at the lunch, pointing at the overalls, this greenhorn who worked on Sunday; nobody ever worked on Sunday in America.

He'd known them all in Russia, all the cronies from his *dorf*, and he saw them smiling at him as he sat in the trolley later.

He quit that night. He came home for breakfast with Sarah and at the table he said: "No more watchman."

"Fired you?" Sarah asked in Yiddish. Joe was on the floor playing. Lev saw the color go out of his wife's face and he shook his head.

"Didn't come to America for this," he said. "Here in America I am not a night watchman. Here I am not a sweeper."

She sank into the chair, the dish towel over her knees, and she put her elbow on the table, her cheek against her hand.

"We'll be all right," he said, and he blew on the coffee to cool it. "I don't steal ten borders to be a sweeper," he said.

He came around the side of the table, standing over his wife. He touched her hair, and she moved her head until it rested against him. He stroked her hair and he said: "Sarah, here we are all right. This much I promised and this is true. Here we make a living without sweeping."

"All right," she said.

"Believe me, Sarah," he said.

"I believe."

He knelt before her and looked up at her, and she took his face in her hands. "I believe," she said, "but I have to tell you."

"Nu," he said.

"I have to tell you."

"Nu. Nu, *tairs*."

She put her arms about his neck and her face in his neck and she said: "We will have another baby," and she started to weep.

But he began to smile and then he grinned and he felt it there in his loins. He picked her up from the chair, holding her and swinging her. Joe looked up from the floor and began to cry, frightened of these crazy people.

Lev Simon went to the Jewish loan association. He borrowed two hundred dollars and he bought a horse and he bought a wagon. A boyhood friend from the *dorf* was a fruit peddler and he took Lev Simon to the market on Jackson Street.

This was a day in May and bananas were cheap. The friend bought a load of bananas for Lev and he figured it out how much Simon should sell each hand for.

"Sell for a quarter," he said to Lev.

"A quarter."

The friend showed Lev how to cut the bananas and how to hold them and then he left Lev.

Lev Simon drove the horse and wagon across the Robert Street Bridge and up on the West Side to his home.

He brought his wife downstairs and showed her the bananas and told her the wares had cost eleven dollars.

"Now you must sell," she said in Yiddish.

"I know."

"Where?"

"I know," he said. "Don't worry, I know," he said, but he knew nothing; neither where to go nor how to sell, but he could not stay here now. He had thought he would feel safer if he saw his wife, but he knew this was no refuge.

He climbed up on the seat and he pulled the brim of his cap down over his eyes. He smiled at his wife and he waved at his son and then urged the horse forward.

He let the horse go, and the animal went up Concord Street and up the George Street hill to Cherokee Heights. He let the horse

lead him forward, sitting bent and crouched a little on the seat, and he was worried.

What have I done?

Two hundred dollars for a horse and wagon.

What have I done? What has happened to me in my head?

How do I sell bananas?

Eleven dollars and no money now for Joe's milk.

What have I done? And he could feel his leg beginning to twitch, the calf fluttering. The horse went past Stevens and King and Elizabeth, past the Stevens School, and Lev could see the children playing at recess and wanted to get off the wagon, leave the horse and the bananas, and never see them again.

He knew nothing of this country, but the horse turned at Morton, smelled the manure in the alley, and followed the smell.

The horse stopped there in the middle of the alley, and a man burning refuse said: "Nice."

Lev Simon sat on the seat and the man asked: "How much for the bananas?"

He climbed onto the fender of the wagon and asked how much the bananas were. Lev Simon got off the seat.

Lev stood beside the man. "How much?" the man asked.

"Quarter."

The man started handling the bananas, digging among them, and then Lev forgot the fear. Lev had paid for these bananas. He reached over and got the man's wrist and moved the man's arm. He looked at the man as he moved the arm, pushing the man back away from the wagon. This was Lev's wagon and Lev's horse.

"Quarter," he said. This was no border guide to bribe.

"Quarter," Lev said.

The man reached into his pocket and came up with a coin purse. He opened the purse and found a quarter, closed the purse, and, holding the quarter, began to reach into the wagon, but Lev held his arm.

Lev found a hand of bananas and he offered them to the man. "Quarter," he said.

Lev held the bananas and the man held the coin and then Lev thought: This is crazy, what is this? He took the quarter from the man's hand, plunked the bananas in the man's arm.

"Thanks," he said to the man.

The horse whinnied. Lev set the brake and then climbed down from the wagon. Here, this place, this was the end of riding. Now the horse was no longer boss. Now he, Lev Simon, was boss.

Now . . . this was America, all right.

No Czar's soldiers on him now, all right.

He pulled up on his trousers and jerked down on the hatbrim. He was scared, all right, and he was ignorant, but in that instant he was making speeches to Sarah. He had the money on the kitchen table and he was telling her of the day. He looked at the houses around him, saw the woman in the kitchen to his right, and reached for a hand of bananas.

Lev went through the gate, the bananas on his arm, feeling his shirt crawling along his back, feeling his pants tight and caught there at the base of his spine. He was sweating and he wanted to take off his tie. He wanted to get back to the horse, and then the woman saw him through the kitchen window and she met him at the door.

She was almost as tall as he. She wore an apron; Lev did not have to know English to know that much. No more than an apron. She wore bedroom slippers and her legs were bare, a little thick, but not heavy, and the apron was open to her breasts, beyond the breasts. She was woman, all right. Lev Simon was not that scared he was blind to that.

She smiled at him and now they were both selling. He had his wares and she had hers and he said: "I buy bananas," and held out his arm with the fruit.

She laughed. "What?"

"I buy bananas," he said. "Quarter, I buy bananas," he said, and she could not stop laughing.

"Please," he said.

She laughed.

"Please," he said. He saw the bananas rotting in the wagon and the horse collapsing. He saw the wagon broken, Joe crying, his wife crying, his wife and a miscarriage, and he wanted to kill this woman before him.

Then she said: "Come in, dear."

He followed her into the kitchen, holding the bananas, holding his cap in the other hand, and he saw her leave the kitchen.

She carried a white leather purse when she returned. She stood before him, one leg in front of the other. She looked at him as she found the quarter and then she set the purse on the kitchen table. She took the bananas out of his hand, her eyes on him; held his hand in hers, put the coin in his palm, and closed the fingers.

She sat down then, crossing her legs, and she said: "Not, 'I buy bananas.' Say, 'Do you want to buy bananas?' Say it, dear."

He said it.

"Come here, dear," she said, and she crooked her finger.

"Thanks."

"I won't hurt you," she said.

"Thanks." Lev Simon wasn't buying this morning.

She rose then and patted his arm. "You come back," she said. "I'm a good customer," she said, and she followed him to the door.

"America," he said, half aloud.

"What?"

"Thanks."

"You come back."

"America," he said. He could feel his back wet and his hair damp as he walked to the wagon. He ran his forearm over his

forehead and got another hand of fruit and walked toward the next house.

"My America," he said, grinning now, looking back at the kitchen window.

He knocked on the door of the next house.

When the woman came to the door, he held up the hand of bananas, turning it over and over, so she could see each piece of fruit, and he said: "You buy bananas.

"Quarter," he said. "You buy."

Hub and Marty were at the kitchen table with coffee when Joe came into the room. He shut the door very slowly and carefully behind him and he held the mops and brooms, propping them at last against the refrigerator.

"He's asleep," Joe said. "I opened the window about an inch, Mart. Is that all right?"

"Did you cover him?" Marty asked.

"You know him. No blankets even in January," Hub said.

"Did you cover him?" Marty asked.

"I covered him. I covered him."

"You ought to leave the door open in case he wakes," Marty said. "Two doors between us, his and the kitchen. I want to hear him if he wakes. If something comes up."

"You know how Pa sleeps," Joe said. "He's good for a couple of hours."

"Open it anyway," Marty said. He knocked the cigarette ash into the saucer.

"We'll wake him, Marty," Joe said.

"Open the door," Marty said. He rose from the chair. "Open it," he ordered, and the red flush began at his neck.

Joe waved disgustedly at his brother and opened the door. "You never change, do you, Champ? Same old redhead. Same old hothead."

Hub sat in Lev's chair against the radiator, one arm atop the metal, his legs crossed. "All right," he said. He had washed and his hair was wet and glistening, and you could see the beard on his face. "All right," he said. "We don't need any arguments."

Joe turned up the flame under the coffeepot and rinsed a cup in the sink. He poured coffee for himself and sat down opposite Hub so that Marty was sitting between them at the head of the red-topped table.

Marty handed Joe a snapshot. "Look at that Dan, Joe," he said of Hub's son. "Look at that kid. Look at those legs; you ever see legs like that on a kid?"

Joe grinned. He held the picture, looking at the nephew he had never seen. He felt warm as he saw the boy, mellow inside him. He handed the picture to Hub. "You got something, Hub. You sure got something with that Dan."

"Next summer," Marty promised himself. "I finish exams, and that same day, right from Chicago, I'm not even coming home. Straight out to see my nephew Dan."

Joe bent over the cup, looking at the coffee. "Lev was telling me earlier. He wants to go out this winter. I was telling him he and Ma ought to go out and lie in the sun."

"Yeah," Hub said. He ran his fingers through his hair. "Yeah, he'll come out."

Marty flung the cigarette at the sink, not turning his head.

"Sure," Hub said. He locked his fingers, pulled them, set his

hands in his lap. "He'll come out," Hub said, and he nodded.

"Him," Marty said. "Has to be him."

"Ah . . ." Joe said.

"Him," Marty said. "That saint."

Hub's head was lowered and he shook it back and forth, biting his lip now. Joe watched him.

"They pick him," Marty said. "I swear I don't understand it."

"Hub," Joe said as he saw his brother's eyes glistening. "Hub."

Hub raised his head and looked at Marty. "How sick is he, Mart?"

"He's sick," Marty said.

"How sick?" Hub's eyes were wet.

Marty looked at him.

"Jesus Christ." Hub's face began to break and the handsome features became grotesque. "Jesus Christ," he said, shaking his head. He put his hand over his face and he was shaking his head, the tears coming now. "Jesus Christ," he said, shaking his head, the tears coming down his cheeks and onto his nose, onto his hand, the fingers wet.

"Hub," Joe said. He reached across the table, but Marty caught his arm.

"Let him, Joe," Marty said, and his eyes were gentle now and warm.

"He'll wake——"

"Joe." Marty moved Joe's arm from the table, looked at his brother. "For his father, Joe," he said. "Can't he cry for his own father, Joe?"

Hub sobbed once, a horrible sound that seemed to come from an animal in agony, and then he got out of the chair, a handkerchief over his face now, and he went to the kitchen sink. He filled his cupped hands with water and bathed his face and reached overhead for a clean towel.

He wiped his face carefully and then, finding the handkerchief,

drew his nose. His face was sniny when he turned to his brothers and he tried to smile for them. "Got a cigarette?" he asked.

Joe held the pack up and Hub took one. He lit it with a kitchen match, which he struck on his pants along the thigh as he had years before, and he inhaled deeply.

Marty reached out to straighten Hub's chair. "Come on, Hub, sit down. Come on, tell us about Danno."

"Come on, Hub," Joe urged. "What all does he do? Is he rough? Can you throw him around?"

Hub flexed his muscle. "Like steel. Honest, not because it's my kid. He's dynamite."

"Is he a good kid, Hub?" Joe asked.

"Yeah, good. He got Helen crazy. He won't rest, the little bum." Hub sat in the chair.

Joe cuffed Marty lightly. "Like this one. Like his sweet and lovin' uncle Marty."

"The thing is"—Hub leaned over the table, his eyes glowing with pride—"I wish I could tell you guys what I feel for him, how he makes me feel. I tell you, I can't go by a store. I can't do anything that isn't motivated by that kid. My life has changed." He gestured with his hand. "My whole life. I don't know what next to do for him."

"Yeah." Marty nodded. "Pa told me that once."

"He told me," Hub said. "He was talking about us and he said he had no life any more."

"Not everybody's," Joe said, "like that. Don't tell me all fathers are like Pa."

"Let me be half the father," Hub said. "I'll be satisfied with half."

"What's he done?" Marty said.

"What hasn't he done?" Joe asked, and Hub nodded in agreement.

"You remember the lamp, Joe?"

"Sure."

"What lamp?" Marty asked. "I never heard about a lamp."

"Tell him, Joe," Hub said.

"What kind of lamp?" Marty asked. "Come on, Joe."

"Ah . . ." Joe said.

"You were a baby," Hub said to Marty. "Tell him, Joe."

"You tell him," Joe said. "You remember it."

"I was a kid," Hub protested. "I hardly remember."

"You were the cause of it." Joe smiled.

Marty hit the table with his fist in fake anger. "One of you tell me," he demanded.

"All right." Joe grinned. "All right, all right. Pa didn't tell me all of it for a long time."

"Come on," Marty urged.

"All right," Joe said, and he put his elbows on the table, cupped his hand, "All right. . . ."

They were living then in the flat on Colorado Street. There were stables in the back, and Lev Simon kept his horse there with Nudelman's, the landlord.

Joe, at eight, had become an insatiable reader. From Tommy Galvin upstairs he had taken all the Alger books. He'd gotten a library card and once a week, on Friday after school, went to the branch up on the Heights, on George Street, where Lev Simon's horse had led him that first day.

Each week he took home the limit, four books, and those he wanted, which he could not check out until he returned the swag under his arm, he hid behind other books on the shelves.

Always on Friday he stopped at the Salvation Army store on Robert Street near his house on his way home from the library. Here he could buy two old pulp magazines for a nickel and, with luck, hide two more between the books, moving carefully and stiff-legged to the door, his back to the old woman who ran the shop.

This was in December, and the skating rink was a block away on Robert Street, before the school. There was skating in the afternoon, there was belly-whopping on a friend's sled. There was hockey in the street with old brooms and evaporated milk cans; no other size would do.

But Joe read at the supper table and he read sitting on the radiator while his father and mother dried the dishes.

He read in bed.

Their bedroom—Joe's and Hub's—was a narrow, boxlike cubicle off the kitchen. Lev Simon had bought a metal, tubular crib at the Salvation Army shop, painted it white, and Joe slept on a cot Nudelman had given them.

There was the kitchen, the bedroom off that. Beyond the kitchen the living room, and off the living room, flanking the front hall, his parents' bedroom.

In the children's bedroom there was a single light screwed into the socket in the high ceiling, no shade, no fixture, the bare bulb against the sweating walls.

Here Joe read.

He would wait until his parents were in bed and then carefully he would draw the blanket over Hub's face as the child slept, shutting out the light.

The child would stir and cry out, and then in an instant Joe was out of bed, the light off, the room darkened, and it worked—until Lev Simon waited outside the bedroom one night and caught Joe covering his brother's face.

"Joe." Lev picked the boy up and sat him on the bed. He made the child comfortable and sat on the bed with Joe. "You gonna kill him, Joe," he said.

"I didn't mean anything." Joe was completely frightened.

"Come here." Lev rose, picked up the boy, and set him down in bed. He covered Joe, tucked the blanket under his feet, and sat on the cot with the boy in the half-dark, the light from the

kitchen coming into the room. He could feel the boy trembling and he could feel the disappointment at not being allowed to read.

"I wouldn't hurt him, Pa."

Lev Simon smoothed the hair from his son's forehead. "I know, Joe," he said. "I know." He found the book on the floor. "What you read here, Joe? Some kind of good book, huh?"

"Indians," Joe said. "It's about Indians."

"Oh."

"I didn't even start it," Joe said, and turned his face to the wall.

This was a man who could not bear to see his child anything but happy. He could not see the child cry, nor hurt, nor disappointed, nor lacking for anything, without becoming sick inside of him, without turning pale, without wanting to cry instead of the child, or be ill for the child.

"Have to sleep too," Lev suggested.

"I sleep. I don't read late."

"Oh."

"Can't even read."

Lev put the book in the boy's hands. "Here, Joe, read him tomorrow," he said, and heard the book fall, strike the floor, slide across the room, and carom off a leg of the crib as the boy thrust it from the bed.

He heard the boy turning in the bed, his face to the wall, and he heard the boy weep, heard the unjustifiable, cruel tears, and felt himself the culprit.

"Joe," and reached for his son.

Felt his son cringe and hug the wall and left the book and the room, shut the door of the room and found the leather jacket to rush outside, forgetting to button the garment against the cold.

There were no vegetables to peddle with in December. Lev Simon could be certain of two or three weeks of work as a section hand, and of ten days in the post office before Christmas, when he had Joe write yes on the application before the citizen question.

He watched Joe through breakfast the next morning, Monday. The boy would not look at him and he left without a good-by, and in Lev Simon's head, he, the father, was at fault, not this intolerant son.

He had a dollar and eighty cents in his pocket which he spread on the kitchen table when Joe had gone. Sarah washed diapers in the bathroom and Lev counted the money.

About the leather jacket: it was heavy and stiff and always cold, even hanging next to the radiator. Beneath it Lev wore a sweater. He wore rubbers, cotton gloves, and a cap.

This was his uniform when he told Sarah he was going out. He looked in on the stable at his horse and spread hay on the floor and walked to Robert Street.

The trolley was a dime. That was twenty cents, and he had only the dollar eighty. He pulled the cap down over his ear, the edge cutting his ears. He walked to the first bridge, the span over the railroad tracks, and then out on the roadway; the sidewalk was not cleared. There was a gas station at the foot of the bridge, and here he paused to warm himself, taking the cap off, rubbing his ears, and then rolling and smoking a cigarette.

He stopped once more after he'd crossed the second bridge, two miles beyond, over the river. There was a drugstore on Fourth Street, at the edge of the loop, and he paused here, careful to keep his hands out of his pockets; thieves kept hands in pockets.

He walked carefully now, looking in store windows, but nothing he saw pleased him, until on Sixth Street he paused before Rosenstiel's, the city's largest department store.

He saw the toys in the windows and bought all of them then and there, everything for Joe and Hub and Marty. He bought the train, the animals, the waterfall, the playhouse, the dolls, the Erector sets, the blocks, the Indian suit for the boy who read Indian books. He bought the bats, the balls, the skis, the stuffed elephant with the saddle atop it, and then he moved on into the

store because the Santa Claus on the corner was ringing the bell and looking at him and Lev Simon needed his dollar eighty.

He found a mean wearing a suit and no coat, figuring this was some kind of boss, and he said to the man: "Where are lamps for small boys?"

"Sir?" the young man asked, the section chief bucking for buyer and the trips to New York. "What did you say, sir?"

"Lamps for reading," Lev said. Maybe people were watching him now. "My small boy needs some kind of small lamp . . ."

"Fifth floor," said the young man, and he took Lev's elbow, turning him and pointing at the elevator bank. "There you are, sir," he said, and smiled the stage smile for Lev.

"Thanks," Lev said.

He went to the elevators, and on the fifth floor, spread out before him, resting on tables and on the floor and hanging from phony ceilings, he saw more lamps than he knew existed.

"Few lamps, all right," he said.

"May I help you, sir?" asked a young man, bowing from the waist.

"A lamp for my boy, small fellow, for his reading," Lev said.

The salesman gestured with his arm and Lev followed him. He showed him lamps for twenty dollars, for fifteen, for ten, and then Lev said: "I think maybe I look and then I tell you what price, eh?"

Lev got the teeth from this one, too, and he began looking at price tags; he could read figures, all right, you didn't need to be a citizen for that. He came down one aisle and then up the other and down again, and no lamps for a dollar eighty.

One for three-fifty, that was the cheapest.

"This is all?" he asked. "No cheaper?"

The teeth again. "Afraid not, sir."

"Maybe you tell me someplace where I buy cheaper?"

"Well, on Jackson Street, sir, there are secondhand stores."

"No secondhand," Lev almost shouted. "For my boy, this lamp, no secondhand."

"Well, have you a charge account, sir?"

"No. No charge."

"Our credit offices are on the next floor, sir. You might like to apply for a charge account."

Lev looked him over. "Then I take home this lamp."

The teeth. Lev knew what he wanted to do to those teeth, all right.

"I'm afraid not, sir. You see, we must investigate."

"What's this—investigate?"

"Check on your credit, sir."

"Got no credit."

"Well, sir . . ." The teeth were tired now.

"Listen, mister." Lev took the man's arm. "Where's your boss?"

"You mean the buyer, sir."

"I mean boss." That Joe crying. No more crying for Lev. "I mean Rosenstiel. Him. Where's he, please?"

At least he'd be rid of this one, the teathy young man thought. "Executive offices are on the next floor, sir," he said, and he took Lev's elbow and he pointed at the elevators.

The secretary had started with C. H.'s father. She was gray and she wore pince-nez. Lev Simon never liked such glasses.

"Who is calling?" she asked.

"Customer," Lev Simon said. "Tell him customer."

"What is your complaint?" she asked. There'd be a new girl in the outer office tomorrow. Passing tramps through.

"Rosenstiel. Please, lady, show me the door."

"I'm very sorry," she said. "Mr. Rosenstiel is not in."

Lev Simon smiled at her. What did she think, that he had to show her a passport? Did she think that was the Czar there behind her?

He pointed at a door. "I go there," he said.

She rose from behind the desk. "He is not in that office," she said.

Lev grinned at her, moved past her and toward the other door.

He had never seen *such* an office. Not in Odessa, nor in Antwerp, nor in Quebec. Not *such* a big, beautiful office with *such* carpets.

The man behind the desk was Lev's age, a handsome man who looked up, frowning. Lev came up to the desk and he stood with his cap and he said: "I know. Not so nice come in like this."

"Yes? Yes? Yes?"

"A lamp," Lev said. "My boy . . . reads . . . lamp . . . not enough money . . . you understand . . ."

"Ah, shit," Lev said. "You talk Jewish, Mr. Rosenstiel?"

"No." Mr. Rosenstiel was smiling now, watching his visitor.

"But you are Jewish?"

"And you are Jewish," Mr. Rosenstiel said.

Then Lev Simon began to tremble. He couldn't stop the leg now, and Mr. Rosenstiel waited.

"Please," Lev said. "I don't mean. Thanks. I'm sorry. Please," he said, and Mr. Rosenstiel came around to the far side of the desk and moved the chair for Lev.

He listened carefully and waited while Lev Simon put the money on the desk which had come from Italy. He counted the money as Lev asked him to, and he took Lev's arm and led him to the private elevator. He let Lev lead him to the three-fifty lamp and he, Rosenstiel, wrapped the lamp for Lev and gave him a receipt.

"Don't pay the rest till May," Lev warned. Mr. Rosenstiel was standing in the cashier's booth, and the toothy young man was watching. Lev wanted no confusion. No charity. He would pay.

"I owe dollar seventy," Lev said.

"That's right, Mr. Simon."

"Nu, all right," Lev said.

He offered his hand to Mr. Rosenstiel, and the owner took Simon's hand and shook it.

"Say," Lev said, and he beckoned. Mr. Rosenstiel leaned over in the cashier's booth. "Can't speak nothing in Jewish?" he asked.

Mr. Rosenstiel shook his head and he smiled. "My grandfather opened this store, Mr. Simon."

"Hmmmmmm," Lev said. "Germany?" he asked.

"Yes. Germany."

"Hmmmmmm. Remember, Mr. Rosenstiel, in May. Can't pay before. I bring *you* the money."

"A pleasure," Mr. Rosenstiel said.

"He told me the whole story once," Joe said.

"Hey," Marty said, "that's where he got that pleasure routine. Sure, that's where he must have gotten it."

"That Pa," Hub said.

"You, you dog," Marty said to Joe. "Crying."

"He could do it," Joe mused. "Who else but him? You know, when he told me the story, I asked him. I said: 'Weren't you afraid?'"

"'Afraid? Of what?' he said. 'Of a *German* Jew afraid?'"

Sarah Simon came out of the kitchen and through the dining room, ahead to the parlor and her sons.

"Madame Defarge," Marty said.

She tried to frown at him, but her lips betrayed her.

"Madame Defarge," Marty said, and he waited in the center of the living room, arms hanging, lower lip out in a caricature of an Apache dancer. "Come here," he said, and stamped his foot, pointing at the rug.

"Respect," she said, stopping there under the arch and looking at her sons. "Shame, Marty, shame," she said, but she was pleased as always with this welterweight of a son, the shortest of the four, with the shoulders of a weight lifter and no hips.

"Here," Marty said, pointing to the carpet at his foot, but she showed him her tongue and turned to Joe for approval. Hub was lying on the couch and Joe sat in the easy chair near the front hall.

She showed Marty her tongue once more and then started for the period chair, the gold-colored, fragile, curved-leg throne she had insisted on when they bought the living-room set. As she turned, her back to Marty, the redhead took one long step, reached for her, bending so one arm came under her knees, and he had her now, twirling with her, swinging her around in a circle, and she, smiling, had her face in his neck, her eyes closed, her arms about him, her ankles crossed.

"Give up?" Marty said. "You give up?"

"No."

"Give up!" he twirled her faster.

"No." Joe and Hub laughed at the pair.

Marty carried her to the gold chair and set her down. "I give up," he said. "I'm not in shape," he said. He was fighting for breath now. "Have to start working out," he told his brothers.

"I won't give up," Sarah Simon said. She got out of the chair and moved to the couch, took Hub's feet in her lap and held them thus.

"Were you in Pa's room?" Hub asked.

She nodded. "He sleeps. I thought maybe I should wake him for lunch."

"Let him sleep," Marty said. "The more sleep, the better."

"How do you like the way he throws you around, Ma?" Joe asked.

"Thank God," she said. "That one," she said of Marty. "Thank God every day that he is just *alive*."

Marty sat on the piano stool watching her.

"Was he that sick, Ma?" Joe asked.

She rubbed Hub's ankle. "You don't remember, Joe?"

"I wasn't very old, Ma. What did I know?"

"*Veh's mir*, woe is me," she said, and she rocked a little on the sofa. "*Veh's mir*," she said. "*Veh, veh, veh, veh, veh*," she repeated, rocking on the sofa, her eyes half closed, "what he had that winter, the pa."

"Why Pa?" Marty asked. "How about you?"

"Me," she said, and she smiled. "Me? Did he let me *zorg*, worry? Did he let me be afraid? When I remember," she said, shaking her head now, "I get cold still. Even now, cold when I remember."

"Why?" Joe asked. "Why? Because Marty was sick?"

"*Nar*, fool," she said. "Marty was three months old with asthma, with eczema, with mastoids, and there is no money for medicine. You hear me, Hub"—she turned to her son on the sofa—"not even for medicine. We charged for groceries, charged for coal, charged for hay, and in March then, no money for medicine. You don't remember, Joe?"

"I remember, all right," he said.

"There. We lived there still by Nudelman."

"Yes, but I remember he got some money," Joe said. "Right about then he got dough."

She smiled secretively. "You don't know how?"

"No." He tried to remember. "I don't know."

"You don't remember Ben Baratz?" She was full of her secret. From Marty: "Ma!"

"Don't remember Baratz came then?" she asked.

"Where is that rat?" Hub asked.

"Don't mention him around here," Marty said. He held the stool, the knuckles white. "Do me a favor, don't mention him."

"Marty, shah," Sarah Simon said. "Shah."

Marty walked to the window. "I get sick when I think of him. You think I'm lying? I want to throw up when I think of him," he said.

Hub raised his head. "You going to shut up so we can hear this?" he asked.

Marty sat on the radiator. "Careful for the curtains," Sarah said.

"What happened, Ma?" Joe asked. "What's the big secret?"

"Pa would kill me," she said, and shivered deliciously as she thought of her secret. "You know when he told me? The first he told me? When Marty was *bar mitzvahed*, thirteen years later. That night he told me."

"Ma," Joe said.

"Nu," she said. "Nu . . ."

Ben Baratz had been after him for years to bootleg. Back there on Winifred Street when they lived under the eaves, Ben Baratz wanted Lev to set up a still in the barn, cook the mash there, and let him, Baratz, sell the stuff.

Baratz said he could sell it through the state, among the farmers; said he *was* selling it, wanted Lev Simon to get some of the easy money.

"If they catch me," Lev Simon said.

"Catch you! Who will catch you?"

"If they catch, Ben. What then, Ben? Back to Russia?"

"They don't catch," Ben said.

"Then you cook," Lev Simon said. "You cook and you sell. I

don't come to America for this crooked business. I'm not a stealer, Ben. Not in Russia, and not here."

"You're a pautz," Ben Baratz said.

"Certain. That's me."

"Pautz."

"All right, Ben. I'm a pautz. Don't talk with me more from this business, Ben. This crooked business."

Until that morning in March when Sarah sent him to the drug-store for the eczema salve. She gave him the prescription and he walked to Michaelson's there on Robert Street.

And Michaelson said no.

"I can't," he told Lev Simon. "I can't keep charging this stuff," he said. "Jesus and Christ, Simon," he said, "I can't afford it."

"Suppose not."

"You know I can't." He held the prescription out to Lev Simon.

"Mike," Lev Simon said. His arms were at his sides. "You know, is not for me. My kid there, for him."

"Jesus—I can't. I promised myself. I can't afford it."

Lev Simon looked at the display tray attached to the counter. He looked carefully at the red cross on the adhesive tape. He watched it very carefully.

"Mike, please," he said.

"Simon, I can't."

Looking at the red cross, he said: "Please . . . Please," and wanted his tongue cut off so he could never beg again.

Michaelson dropped the prescription on the counter and almost ran to the back room. He could not blame Mike. He owed Mike over a hundred dollars. Mike was a poor man, how could he blame Mike, or be mad with Mike? He reached for the paper.

On Robert Street the snow was packed up against the gutter, black and gray and dirty and manure on it. The street was glassy and the wind came down from Cherokee Heights and slammed against Lev's leather jacket, stole inside the jacket and inside the

sweater, and Lev Simon could feel it against his skin. Today he could feel it inside of him and there against him between his legs.

He came down toward Colorado Street and he stopped at the theater, asked the manager if he needed sweeping or ashes hauled or something.

He stopped at the undertaking parlor there on Delos and asked if they had ashes. He knew what he was going to do, all right, but he wanted to postpone it, lay it over, and everybody's ashes were contracted for.

Lev Simon had the prescription and another six weeks before there was a nickel to be made. He had the horse and wagon and customers on Cherokee Heights and nothing to sell them, and now he needed merchandise.

His kid had eczema and asthma.

There was a Jewish relief agency and there was the Community Chest and the visiting nurse, the city doctors, and Ancker Hospital, but he hadn't come to America for charity. Not ten borders for handouts.

He walked into the yard of the four-family building and back to the stable. The wagon was in the stable, unused since October, and he got axle grease for the wheels. He put the harness on the horse and hitched him up and took a dozen bushels from the mound against the wall and filled each half full with hay.

He took the heavy blanket off the horse and spread it over the bushels on the floor of the wagon.

She didn't see him until he was sitting up there on the seat with the reins on his hand. She came out on the back porch with a sweater over her and she said: "The medicine, Lev."

"Takes couple hours."

"Where are you going? In this cold. You'll catch cold. Do I need you sick, Lev?"

He couldn't talk to her. In his mind you could not put such

things to a woman. In his head there was a woman's world and a man's world, and he could not tell her.

He urged the horse forward and out of the yard, toward Robert Street and the West Side. The horse had not been shod for six months and Lev Simon drove very carefully and slowly, keeping the horse up against the curb so the animal could get footing in the snow.

The wind invaded the wagon and Lev Simon stopped the horse once, climbed back into the wagon to push the blanket under the bushels. The wind came in under his trousers and against the long underwear. He could see the steam from the horse's nostrils and the steam from his nose when he breathed.

He could see Marty with his face swollen with eczema.

He turned off into the West Side and here the going was easier; the plows had not been through regularly. He came down Fairfield, turned, and went into the alley behind the synagogue on Mendota Street. He backed the wagon up against the synagogue's rear door and he braked the vehicle. He dropped the tail gate and then for an instant he felt his leg going, but he pulled up on his trousers and he spit and ran the cotton glove over his chin, feeling the hay smell in his nose, and took a bushel under his arm and went into the synagogue.

He found Shmul Goodkind in the basement, in the morning prayer room.

A handsome man, Goodkind, the sexton. A big man of about sixty years who wore black suits, alpaca coats, always white shirts. A man with a gray, full beard and thin, blue lips and white, amazingly white, puffy hands below the French cuffs. A handy man with a knife, Sexton Goodkind, enjoying an odd monopoly in St. Paul, untouched by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Sexton Goodkind, the *mal*, the circumciser, handy man with a knife. He had cut Hub and he had cut Marty, and always, at the

High Holidays or at Jewish picnics, he would smile at the women, point at a boy or a youth, or now, after so many years, even a man, and say: "I cut you, yes?"

A very religious man, the sexton. All his days in the synagogue, except when he was called to city hall for good government committees, for he spoke English and *wrote* English. Except when he'd have a special summons from an isolated Jew in North Dakota or northern Minnesota, in which case the fee jumped from ten dollars to a hundred, and he had been known to demand and get two hundred.

In cash. No credit for the sexton. And a round-trip railroad ticket. Pullman.

Leader in the community, with a son in medical school and another, the oldest, a rising young man in the county attorney's office.

"Landsman," said Goodkind. "Another one?" he asked jokingly. He had a full head of hair below the skullcap.

Samuel Goodkind crossed his arms, pushing his hands up his sleeves in mandarin fashion. "Brought something for the *shul*, synagogue?" he asked.

"Need something," Lev Simon said.

"Sure." Shmul Goodkind smiled and his eyebrows raised and he disengaged his hands. "Why not? You're also a *mentsch*, person. Why not? A pint, landsman, or a quart?"

"Maybe a quart." Lev Simon wanted him with the merchandise. "Let me see first."

"A pleasure," said the sexton. "Why not? You're a customer," he said, and he led Lev Simon from the prayer room, through the basement, and up the stairs to the synagogue proper, musty and dank. He led him down the main aisle, the podium and the ark up on the platform, and he led Simon up to the ark.

The sexton moved one of the high-backed velvet chairs in which the president sat at services and he sat down. He pushed

against a panel at the base of the ark and removed a handful of prayer books.

The whisky was stacked behind, in pints and in quarts, corn and colored, as neat as a medicine cabinet. The sexton was a meticulous man.

"All right," Lev Simon said. "A dozen quarts," and he set down the bushel. "A quart in a bushel."

Shmul Goodkind turned in his chair, bent over, his elbows on his knees, and he smiled at Lev Simon with new respect. "Landsman," he said. "Mazeltov," he said to the new ally against the stupid laws. "Mazeltov."

"All right." Lev Simon had felt violence within him for few men.

"*Gelt*," Sexton Goodkind reminded him.

"Come on," Lev said. "Quick."

The thin-lipped smile. "*Gelt*."

All right, then. "When I sell."

Sexton Goodkind closed the panel and turned to look up at Lev Simon, smiling and shaking his head.

There was no arguing with the sexton.

Lev Simon took his gloves off and he said to the gloves in his hand: "My horse. There outside. From here to the government." He meant the Federal Building. "Not to the police, Shmul; with the police you are partners. To the government."

Sexton Goodkind gestured with his hand, showing the way, as a headwaiter.

Lev Simon picked up the bushel and put it under his arm. "*Mein kind*," he said. "You think I'm here if not for him?" He went down the stairs to the main level and started up the aisle, and he was at the rear near the women's section when the sexton stopped him.

Lev Simon came in twelve times, and in each bushel the sexton dropped a quart of whisky, the good merchandise that had been colored.

The sexton walked to the rear door with Lev and he said: "Twenty-five dollars. This is wholesale."

"Tonight."

"Better," the sexton said. "You better come, landsman," he said. "Come and stay for evening prayers," he said.

"I don't pray."

"Twenty-five dollars. God ride with you," he said, and clapped Lev's shoulder and then hurried inside to the warm prayer room in the basement. There was a passage in the Talmud which had been bothering him.

Lev Simon sold eight quarts for five dollars each. His customers in Cherokee Heights were delighted; one woman bought three quarts. They were very pleased on Cherokee Heights, although three customers haggled, and to them he sold quarts for four dollars each.

And the big, handsome woman, Mrs. Lord, she who had bought the first hand of bananas and had never given up trying to have Lev Simon sample her wares, she paid ten dollars for her quart.

Coming down the George Street hill at noon, he walked before the horse, leading the animal slowly, the hoofs slipping and sliding on the ice. He had sixty-two dollars in his pocket and he was very careful coming down the hill, for he could not afford a lame horse or even a set of shoes for the animal.

The wind almost felled him there on the hill, but he came down slowly, the blanket over the empty bushels in the wagon, the money in his pocket, and the horse breathing steam around Lev Simon's head.

He climbed onto the wagon on Concord Street and rode down to the Y in the street where it became Robert after the turn. He left the horse standing in front of the drugstore, the near wheels four inches deep in the soiled snow.

He got Michaelson in the back room and gave him thirty-seven dollars on account—and the prescription.

He would not use the money for food, for coal, for rent, for hay. For medicine, all right.

He could not control the sickness. If Marty had eczema, he could not fight that. He had it in his head that for the other things—food, rent, coal—he was to blame, this was at his feet, but he could use the money for medicine.

He waited for the prescription, and when Michaelson had wrapped the small bottle of salve he beckoned the druggist to the cigar counter.

“Pack Lokies,” he said.

Michaelson reached in under the glass and put his hand over the box of Bull Durham sacks. “No makings?” he asked, looking up at Lev.

“Lokies.”

“Splurging, eh?” Michaelson never asked how Lev had gotten the money, nor did he ever again worry about being paid.

“Yeah, splurge,” he said. He gave Michaelson a dollar and waited for the change.

He’d get fifteen cents from Sarah this afternoon. She could take it from Joe’s penny bank. He wanted nothing from the good circumciser.

Standing outside, leaning back against the door, the sexton’s money in his pocket and the small jar of salve against his hip, Lev Simon opened the pack of cigarettes, lit himself a smoke.

He took one long, deep drag, and then he looked at the wagon, the blanket covering the bushels, remembered the wares he’d carried, remembered the other wagon and the Canadian moon that night, and let the cigarette fall from his fingers onto the icy walk.

Lev Simon moved to the wagon and let the pack of cigarettes fall into the dirty snow. Standing against the wagon, his feet deep in the snow, holding onto the tail gate, his legs spread and his forehead touching the cold, cold wood, he threw up for five minutes.

When Sarah Simon had finished she went to the window and looked down the street. "I wonder when Hy's through today?" she asked.

"He's got a histology lecture at one," Marty said. "He'll be home about three. He's got the Ford."

"I'll look at Pa," she said, and walked toward the bedroom.

They waited until she had closed the door of the bedroom behind her.

"Do you think she knows?" Hub asked.

"No," Marty said.

"No," Joe said. "How can she know or how can she believe it? She thinks he's the world, for Christ's sake. She wouldn't believe it if she did know."

"Yeah," Marty said.

Hub swung his legs off the couch and reached for his shoes. He was bent over that way, holding one shoe, and then he raised it and threw it back to the floor.

"Sonofabitch," he said. "Dirty sonofabitch."

In Lev Simon's mind he was a stranger always with the Gentile.

He had it that St. Paul was *goy* country, as the Russian *dorf* had been, as was all of America.

The way he had it, he held a kind of lease on his life with the Gentile, the landlord, and what he never forgot here in America

was the sudden death clause which the *goy* could always invoke.

He knew what he had here in America, knew the locks worked on the doors, and never from the night they crossed the border did he want to leave. St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota, U.S.A., the bailiwick was big enough, he needed no more distant horizon, but never did he forget he was here by the grace of.

It was the same as with an animal, a wolf, say, which you could bring into your house and feed and bed down for the night. You could make friends with the wolf, your children could grow up with the animal. You could sit before your fire with the wolf at your side and he might even defend you against the intrusion of a burglar, but Lev Simon always waited for that moment when the wolf would hear the cries of its brothers, leave the hearth, and return later leading the pack to the kill.

Yet he went to the wolves, into the jungle in that October two months before Hy was born.

The horse had become sickly the week before, unable to rise one morning, and Lev Simon in terror had nursed the animal back to its feet, walked with it to South St. Paul, leading it the five miles, and there sold it for a hundred dollars.

He needed no horse to feed through the winter, and in the spring . . . well . . . in the spring . . .

The hundred would last through the end of the year and then he could borrow two hundred dollars from the loan—they took their twelve dollars' interest from the top—and all the next summer paying it back.

About the hospital he was afraid to think.

He was sitting that morning with Abe Schmukler. They were in the glass-enclosed office of the Northwest Fruit and Produce which Abe owned, their feet up against the gas burner, the office sweet and sickly-smelling, and Lev said:

"Where is there a dollar, Abe?"

Of Abe, Lev said to his wife always: "An American boy,

finished high school here. Where is there football, baseball, there is Abe."

"Where is there a living to make, Abe?" Lev asked.

Abe put his thumbnails together at the stem of a magnificent Jonathan apple and split the fruit in two. He offered half to Lev and then, taking a knife from his pocket, cut a piece of the apple, bringing the blade to his mouth and eating it from the metal.

"Lev, I don't know."

"Another winter. You know, makes me sick, this winter. Not used to it, lay in the house four months."

"You're a hustler. You're a hustling Joe."

Lev watched him, waiting for the younger man to split his mouth open with the knife.

"Yah. Hustler. What good is hustling? Make me here a salesman, Abe. A driver. Something."

Abe put the tip of the blade against Lev's leather jacket. "If I had a spot. You first, Lev. You're my kind of boy."

"What good is?" Lev held the half apple. "You know, I don't talk much with people. You, well, you all right. 'Nother baby next month."

"No!"

"True." Lev felt the ache in his chest, felt the heaviness in his arms. He dropped the apple into the spittoon at their feet. He was ashamed before Abe, but he could feel it across his chest, couldn't hold it any longer. "Something," he said.

"Something to make some kind of living for my family. Honest an' true, Abe, we live now almost two years there on Colorado Street upstairs." They had moved down the block to a duplex. "Almost two years and no furniture in living room. Empty. Like goddamn railroad station is my living room," and he slammed the counter.

He hit it a third time and then Abe Schmukler jabbed the knife blade against the leather jacket. "Lev, wait," he said. "My Christ,

wait." He popped the rest of the apple into his mouth. He dropped the knife on the counter and he grabbed Lev's jacket with his hands. "Will you go to North Dakota?" he asked.

He could not tell Abe Schumker he was afraid of North Dakota, wouldn't think of it, nor talk of it. "All right," he said.

"I've got a car of Kieffer pears on track," Abe said. He let go of Lev and picked up the phone, asked for long distance. "They're loose and they cost me a quarter a bushel, you know, scrubs." To the operator: "Get me Sam Brown in Florence, North Dakota."

To Lev: "Brown. His name was Fishman, he changed it, but a sweet guy. We played ball together at Mechanic Arts. Here, Lev, those pears are rotting on me. Sam's got a general store up there in this small town. Listen, I'll ship the pears up. You go with them. Rent some vacant store for two days, near the siding. Hire someone to shovel the pears out into the store, paint some signs, sell them a buck a bushel. No containers, no nothing. Let 'em bring sacks. There's seven hundred and fifty bushels, and if you sell half, we're all right. I'll pay for shipping; you can ride the caboose up. How about it?"

To the operator: "Yeah, that's him. Sam, ya dog, Abe Schumker. Listen, Sam . . ."

Lev Simon waited until Abe had finished talking. He waited while Abe called the Great Northern and got the shipment arranged.

"All right, you got money?" Abe asked.

"Got."

"Here." Abe counted twenty dollars. "Whatever they bring, you get half. Don't worry about Sam, he's my buddy. The worst I'm out is shipping; I'd have to dump them anyway. You want a dollar, here's a shot."

"Say, Abe . . ."

"What? What?"

"You know . . ."

"What, for Pete's sake?"

"You got some kinda suitcase, something? Old one, maybe. Anything."

Abe put his arm about Lev's shoulders and dug his huge hand into the older man's shoulders. "I'll get you a suitcase, sweetheart," he promised. "I'll bring one down tomorrow." He pulled Lev to him. "Don't be so goddamn ashamed. No shame to hustle the buck."

"S'pose not," Lev said, but talking didn't help it.

There was a good chance for failure. Canning season was over, the Kieffer pears were scrawny and mottled at best, and these were beginning to rot. There was a good chance he'd have nothing to show for this experiment, but to do something—finally and at last to get a shot at the honest dollar. "Abe . . ."

"What now?"

"Why you . . . what for . . . me . . ."

"For Christ's sake, what?"

"Why you do this for me?"

Abe held the leather jacket. "The truth?"

"Sure, the truth."

"My father, Lev. You remind me of the old man. You're like my father. He was a saint, Lev, a goddamn, wonderful saint."

Lev Simon could have driven to Florence with Ben Baratz. That night the four of them—Lev, Sarah, Ruth, Ben—were in the Simon kitchen drinking tea. Ben Baratz said he was going up for cattle the next afternoon.

"Go, too," Sarah said. "Better than the caboose there with the dirt."

"No, maybe not," Lev said.

"Go," Ruth said.

"Don't be a pautz," Ben Baratz said.

"No."

"What's the matter, you have to feed the pears?" Ben Baratz asked.

"All right, then, I tell you," Lev said. "You carry visky, Ben. Bootleg. I don't drive with visky," he said.

"Ah . . ."

"You, ah," Lev said. "Go, ah . . ." he said. "And if they stop us there on the highway there in North Dakota . . ."

"Ah . . ." Ben Baratz turned in his chair.

"You a citizen, Ben. American Legion. Me. What? Back to Russia? I don't go."

He left on the train the next afternoon. He had Abe Schmukler's bag and in it, with the extra shirt and his razor and the wool socks, he had a whole salami, almost a yard long. He, Lev Simon, had paid for it. He had a brisket of corned beef, and from Sarah he had taken a jar of dill pickles and a jar of small green tomatoes and a jar of pimentos. He had three loaves of pound-and-a-half pumpernickel, and he had a jar of German mustard.

He rode in the caboose that night and until noon the next day. Then they switched the car of pears onto the goose which ran into Florence, and Lev Simon rode in the engine for eighty miles. It was long dark when they got to Florence.

Sam Brown was waiting at the freight station. The man was enormous. He was better than six feet for sure, Lev decided, and two hundred and fifty pounds easy. He got Lev's hand in both of his and Simon remembered when he kneaded dough at night for his wife. He wore a turtle-neck sweater and corduroy pants and his face was like a gentle St. Bernard's.

"The pears," Lev said.

"Screw 'em," Sam Brown said. He had his arm about Lev's shoulders. American boys, Lev thought, have to hug all the time. "Screw 'em," Sam repeated. "Boy, I'm glad to see you. Don't see any Jews from one year to the next up here," he said. "Here, gimme that suitcase. I got a store rented for you, I got the

signs painted, and there ain't a farmer in the whole goddamn county don't know about these pears. Don't worry about the goddamn pears. Come on up to the house. My old lady's got supper. I married a *shikseh*. Cute little Swede. We got two kids already. I love that girl. Come on. She makes me *kreplach*. Cooks like a chef. We got ham tonight." He stopped in the road and looked carefully at Lev Simon. "You're not one of them *frumer*, pious, Jews, are you? You eat ham?"

"Before you're born," Lev Simon said.

The arm on his shoulders again. Lev almost went down from the slap on his back. "Come on, Pa," he said. "God damn it, I'm glad to see you. How's that sonofabitch, Abe? What a sonofabitch he is. You know something, Pa"—Lev was warmed by the word, held safe and warm by it—"you know something, me and that Abe were the two toughest Jews in St. Paul. We grew up there on Fairfield Street on the West Side, and there wasn't a *goy* at Lafayette School didn't fill his pants when he saw us coming. This suitcase is heavy; what the hell you got in here, booze? I got plenty of booze, for Christ's sake. Hey, Barbara," as they approached the house, "hey, Bobs, looks who I got. What's your name again, Pa?"

Barbara Brown was a tall, quiet, handsome girl with beautiful blonde hair which she wore in a pug at her neck. She shook hands with Lev Simon and took his leather jacket and Lev thought: A *shikseh*. America, he thought, and saved this to tell Sarah.

"Christ Almighty," Sam said, "I gotta see what's in this suitcase," and he set it on a chair.

"Sam!" Barbara said.

"That's all right, honey. Ain't it all right, Pa?"

"Sure," Lev said. He couldn't have figured it better.

Look at his face, Lev thought as Sam took out the pumpernickel. He held the pumpernickel in his huge hand and turned to Lev, speechless. Lev smiled at him. Sam set the pumpernickel on

the kitchen table and came out with another loaf and the third and the salami cut in half and wrapped.

"Oh, my Jesus," he said.

He came out with the brisket of corned beef.

"Oh, my good Christ," he said. He looked up at his wife. "Bobs, look," he said, and held up the corned beef.

He came out with the dill pickles, with the mustard, the pimentos, the green tomatoes, and he held the tomatoes in his hand like a football and brought the jar to his lips to kiss it.

"Like my ma's," he said. "God damn me, just like my ma's."

"My wife makes," Lev said. "All my wife's," he said, very proud of Sarah and pleased that he had thought of all this.

Sam sat down and pushed everything together with his arms. He got a bread knife and cut off almost a third of one piece of pumpernickel. He opened the jar of tomatoes as one presses a light switch and popped one and another into his mouth, tore off a chunk of bread and ate that.

"Honey?" he said. "How about it, Bobs?"

She smiled and bent to kiss the back of his neck. "The ham will keep," she said.

He patted her arm. "Come on, honey, sit down. Come on, Pa. Christ Almighty, what do you want, Pa? You want my life? It's yours. You want my store? Take it. Everything I got but my old lady and my kids— Hey, we got to save some for the kids," he said. "God damn it, let 'em learn what real food is. . . . Jesus Christ. . . ."

The store Sam Brown had arranged for was twenty feet from the railroad siding. The freight agent hired the help for Lev Simon, and by nightfall the next day the pears were ceiling high, piled atop the carpet of wrapping paper Sam Brown had provided. There was a stove in the store against the possibilities of freezing, and after supper that night Lev Simon came back to the store to bank the stove well and stand there with his pears. The store

had a wide front with a door in the center, and when Lev Simon was ready to leave Sam Brown appeared.

"How do you feel? Lucky? Don't worry, Pa, the joint'll be empty tomorrow night. You're home right now. I can't help you sell, but don't worry. These farmers are all right, they like a bargain, and they're like that with me," and he held up two fingers pressed together.

"Come on." Sam Brown tugged at the leather jacket. "Bobs will make us some salami sandwiches."

"Sure." Lev Simon surveyed his store and his pears. Maybe luck changes now, he thought. Maybe now, maybe time is already. He thought this was a time for big words and big thought, but he could only worry about the pears freezing.

"Come on," Sam Brown said.

Lev Simon locked the door of the store with his key and put his key in his pocket, and they started across the main street to Brown's house.

"Say, Sam," he said as they walked. "No kinds trouble here? One Jew alone?"

"They know better. Well, yeah, when I first came," he said. "You know, whispers, that kind of thing. But I'm married now to one of them, don't forget. They don't give me no trouble," he said.

"Hope not," Lev said.

"What are you worrying about?"

"Well . . ."

"What's the matter, Pa?"

"My first chance, this," Lev said. "You know, I'm lousy fruit peddler. First time, this kind business, so I worry."

"Forget it, Pa." Lev's shoulder had become chafed from the constant slapping. "Forget it. Come on for that sandwich."

Later, when he lay on the couch that Barbara had covered with

sheets, he thought to write Sarah. He thought to call her, suddenly wanted to phone her.

That night he was awake at one o'clock, at two, at four. At five he got out of bed. He dressed in the dark and was very careful and quiet in the bathroom. He had to fix that fire. He couldn't lay there with the pears maybe freezing.

He had the keys in his pocket and he thought he was the boss. In his mind he was the boss and he had the feeling for good luck as he walked to the store, the air cold against his face, and he was in a hurry to get to his pears.

He came around to the side of the store and, reaching for his keys, saw the white of the newspaper and struck a match. There was a mound of manure there on the paper before the door.

Like somebody had a rope around his neck suddenly. Like he was back in Russia and it was payday at the garrison outside the *dorf*, the soldiers drunk, and they were going to kill a few Jews.

For an instant, in that first wild, unbelieving, terror-filled moment as he stood with the match in his hand, he thought to run. He thought he must get to Sarah and to the kids and pack, this was not his America here.

There was another border to cross now. For an instant he thought they were watching him, now they had him. They were waiting, and in a moment he would be led off into the fields and they would laugh and tell him to get on his knees, hit him once with the butt of a revolver to bring him down, and then come around behind—they always shot from behind—and blow his head off.

He thought: It's so cold to die here in these fields, this morning in October. Alone here in October. He thought: My God, lying there in the fields, and Sarah alone with the kids, and he saw the blood red on the wheat, freezing into red icicles on the grain.

He turned in this strange town, among the wolves, trying to see

in the darkness, waiting for them now, but there was only the still, deadly quiet street, the bank across the way, and he stepped over the newspaper and went into the store. Some valentine, he thought. Some present. He stood before the stove in the darkness until he saw the street begin to be visible in the morning light and at last the glow of a bulb in Brown's kitchen.

If I have a gun, he thought. What for, the gun? Then for sure back to Russia. Shoot the gun and the police are here for Russia, and he thought of what he would tell Abe Schmukler. That was some border he had crossed. He'd put handcuffs on himself with that border, all right. No chance now.

He thought of the bare living room.

Of Sarah.

Of Sarah pregnant.

Not even a horse now.

Ai-yai-yai . . .

He locked the store then, stepping once more over the newspaper, and saw the cluster of men before the hotel and turned away. He was not afraid. He was trapped because there was the border.

Sam Brown was on the stoop lighting a cigarette when Lev Simon appeared. "Where the hell you been, Pa? Worried about them pears, huh? Don't worry, they'll be gone tonight."

"Sure."

"Come on, Pa. I got a coffeepot in my store. There'll be nobody around before eight o'clock or so."

"You mistaken."

"Yeah? You sell some already?" Sam Brown threw baseballs as he walked. He threw and he caught. He boxed as they walked, snorting, breathing heavily through his nose.

"No customers," Lev said.

"No?" Sam caught a ball thrown to him. "What then, Pa?"

"Come. See."

"What?" He held Lev's arm as they walked. "What is it? What's up?" He bent slightly to peer down at Lev's face, holding his arm gently. "What's the matter? What the hell is wrong? What happened? Something happened. I know goddamn well something happened. They froze, huh? They couldn't freeze. It's too warm. You had the stove, for Christ's sake. What? Tell me, Pa, what——" And they were around the corner of the store and Sam Brown stopped, pushing Lev from him as though to be clear to swing, looking at the newspaper and shaking his head.

"Oh, Jesus," he said. "Oh, Christ. Oh, you poor bastard, to come on this. Oh, my God," muttering to himself, feeling the blame, feeling the pity for the man beside him.

"Oh, my God," Sam Brown said, and he looked up and down the road and at last saw the cluster of men at the hotel and he said: "Yes. Aha. Yes, sure," and he could not hold his hands still now, ground one fist into the other, moved his feet. "Not you," he said. "Me. They done it to me. Why did they do it? What for did they do it? My good God, I'm married to one of them, don't they know I'm married to one of them?"

"Take easy."

"Married to one of them. I go to church with her Christmas, with the kids. What didn't I do? Married one, what else could I do?"

"Take easy." Lev Simon was afraid for the big fellow. "Take easy, Sam, please."

"Light the lights," Sam ordered.

"Where?"

"In the store." Sam moved Lev Simon forward. "Leave it there. Leave the greetings and light the lights."

Lev stepped over the newspaper again, and in a moment all the lights were burning. He came out to stand with Sam Brown and the big fellow said: "All right, come on."

"I clean ap," Lev said.

"No. Not here. Not in Florence. I'm not my old man," Sam Brown said, "running from them and hiding in cellars. You don't hide here, Pa," and Lev Simon's education was beginning; he was studying for his first papers now in the cold street of the tiny town.

"Better I clean ap."

"NO!" Sam Brown grabbed him. "Clean up and I might as well sell out. God damn them, I might as well leave.

"Come on," he said.

Sam Brown led him down the street and across the way to the other store, to Nicholson's. Sam Brown told him to wait and went in and got Nicholson and his big, drooling son who wore sleeve bands to his elbows. He led them to the bank where Palmer sat behind his desk, his hat on, reading the *Sunday Fargo Forum*.

Palmer, the banker, looked up from the paper. "Need money this early, Sam?"

"Come on, banker."

"Come where, Sam? I'm a busy man."

Sam Brown reached over and took the newspaper from the banker. He got it with both hands, pushing it together, making a ball of the entire newspaper. He got the banker's jacket and he held it open for the banker to slip into.

"Where, Sam?" asked the banker, who called balls and strikes for the high school games, while Sam umpired the bases, and switched with him at the end of the fourth inning. But he got into the jacket. "Where, Sam?"

Sam Brown pushed the door of the bank open for Palmer and he led the banker and the Nicholsons and Lev Simon down through the town to the cluster of men. "Now," Sam Brown said. "Come on, now. Show starts," he said, and stepped aside, pointing at the newspaper, and then led them to the lighted store.

They snickered and then laughed at the newspaper, laughed aloud, and Lev Simon looked at them and changed their clothes

in his head, looked at them with their clothes changed, and they were the same, all right. Mujiks and Czar's soldiers, all right, every one of them, and the banker the Czar's representative, but he could not change Sam Brown; this was a different species of Jew. He had never met Sam Brown before in his travels.

Sam Brown had his hands on his hips, standing there before them in the road in front of the store. "Who is the shit specialist?" he asked. "Who does Simon thank for the present?"

They were still.

"Somebody here did a good job for the Jew. Who do I thank?"

No answer.

"Such big, brave guys, aren't you?" His chest rose and fell as though he were fighting for air, losing air in the operating theater. "What do you think of these big, bashful guys, Pa?" he asked. "Somebody remembers there's another Jew in town, and overnight they got quotas.

"WHO'S SETTING THE QUOTAS FOR FLORENCE?" he shouted. He was almost overcome with rage now.

Sam Brown watched the banker, but Palmer had his hands in his pockets, his Stetson over his eyes, and he didn't answer.

"Got a real, nice greeting here," Sam Brown said, quieter now. "I got to thank the senders."

He moved toward the banker. He was next to the banker, Lev Simon alone with his back to the greetings, and Sam Brown said: "I know one thing, the banker won't give presents without six per cent, so the present isn't from the banker."

He looked at the circle around him. "But I know something; maybe I'll give the banker a free present anyway. Then the banker won't be so healthy," he said. In Sam's mind the banker was all of them now, all of them together, and each alone had deposited the newspaper, and they were all enemies.

"How many?" Sam asked, and he counted eleven aloud. "My Christ, some real, brave guys," he said. "Well, first maybe I'll

break the banker's neck, start with him," he said, and he moved his arm, finding the banker's wrist as he watched the faces of the others, waiting for the guilt to show.

Then one man said, "All right, you bastard."

He was from the saloon, a trucker who wasn't working, and he stood on a slight ridge in the road where the street had frozen after a rain. Lev Simon saw the trucker wore high laced boots and teetered a bit on the ridge.

Sam Brown let go the banker's arm, and another, a little man—he worked in Nicholson's store on Saturdays and his wife cleaned house for the banker—said: "Me, God damn you."

"Swell," Sam said. "Swell guys, both of you. Sure didn't expect one of you sweethearts to do such a good job, carry this present all alone. Swell," he said. "See," he said to the banker, "now I've got to thank my pals," and the others, the nine other men, stepped clear of the pair and they waited.

To the pair Brown said: "Clean it!"

He pointed to the newspaper, turning away from the man in the boots, who bent suddenly then, reaching for the jackknife pushed down along his right boot, and Lev Simon said: "Sam!"

"—— you," the trucker said to Sam. "You bastard —— yourself," his fingers pulling at the knife as Sam turned, crouched, arms wide, and then went into the trucker, his shoulder into the trucker's stomach, driving him back on the scarred, frozen road. Sam had his arms around the trucker as he drove, drove, drove him back, and then he held him, squeezed him, picked him up, and threw him toward the hotel. He followed the trucker, and as the man got the knife, Sam kicked at his groin, kicked him once horribly, feeling the trucker go there against his shoe, and the man screamed and curled up, writhing, his knees pulled up high and his body moving around slowly in a wide circle like a dog after its tail, his mouth open and his eyes closed with the pain.

"A-a-a-a-h-h-h-h," the trucker groaned. And again: "A-a-a-a-h-h-h-h," and he fainted.

Brown turned, watching the confederate. He saw Nicholson's son, drooling now, his face white, but he had business with the little man.

He stood before the little man, and he shook his head once and smiled at him and said: "You little sonofabitch. You crummy, little sonofabitch," and he picked the little man off his feet, lifted him by the shoulders, and dropped him. He lifted him and dropped him on his feet. He lifted him and dropped him, and the little man had his hands on Brown's huge wrists. Brown watched the little man, lifting him and dropping him, until he saw the man weeping, and then he let go, turned him toward the newspaper, and kicked him square in the behind.

"Clean it, junior," he said.

The trucker was alone on the frozen ground when Lev Simon knelt at his side. Lev put his hand down there, easy and gentle, and the trucker began to weep. "Hurts pretty bad, huh?" Lev asked solicitously. "I know," he said, and he grimaced. "Have myself once, from a calf, in old country." He loosened the man's belt, and then Sam Brown grabbed Lev's shoulder.

"Let him lay, the sonofabitch," Brown said.

Lev Simon looked up at him. "Shah, Sam," he said, as he would to his son. "Shah, shah, mister." He was fumbling with the trucker's belt. "Are you one with them?" he asked. "Enough, mister," he said as he would speak to Joe or to Hub. "Help me here," he said.

"Sam," he said.

Brown bent, and together they carried the trucker into the store with the pears. They went past the banker, who watched Lev Simon, his Stetson over his eyes, and Lev Simon got the trucker comfortable.

He got the trucker a drink of water from the tap at the rear

of the store and then he said to Sam Brown: "Bring me here the little fellow."

"Pa . . ."

"Sam." He looked at the big man. "Sam."

He had the little fellow beside him and he said to the trucker and to the other culprit: "You don't work, neither, yeah?"

Lev nodded. "You work here. Settle ap wages later. First we sell."

He patted the trucker's shoulder and nodded for the trucker. "Terrible." He nodded. "I know." He grinned. "Still—better than have babies. Lay quiet, please. Don't take long now," he said, and turned to the banker and to Sam Brown.

The banker watched him. "How much?" he asked.

"How much what?"

"The pears."

"For you?" Lev said, and he was in business now, all right. "For you, Mr. Banker," and he held up his forefinger. "Buck a bushel."

"Five," the banker said, and he turned to the little man. "Take five to the house," he said, and to Lev: "My name is Palmer," he said.

He offered his hand.

"My pleasure," Lev said. "My real pleasure."

When he left and before the first of the farmers came, those who would empty the store by nightfall, paying a dollar a bushel, buying in five- and ten-bushel lots, Sam Brown was at last working the anger out of him.

"What'd you pick the trucker up for?" he wanted to know. "What for, tell me that, so they'll do it again, so they won't learn? What the hell is the matter with you, Pa, tell me that?"

Lev Simon took the huge hand in both of his and he rubbed his thumb over Brown's knuckles. "Sick and tired from this fighting, from this arguments," he said.

"Teach 'em," Sam Brown said.

"You teach," Lev agreed. "Now for sure they learn," he said.

"But to hire them. To pay them."

Lev Simon doubled the thick fingers back, making a fist of Brown's hand. "Their town, Sam," he said. "Remember, mister, their town, their Florence. Their North Dakota, mister, and their America. Remember this much, Sam, for you and for your kids there with Babra.

"We are strangers here with this trucker, Sam. He is the boss, not you."

"Not with me," Sam Brown said. "No, sir, God damn it, not with me, hell with them bastards, hell with them. The bastards."

American boy, Lev thought, marveling. Born here, he thought enviously.

"All right, Sam," Lev said. "Bastards," he said quietly, not for the trucker to hear and be insulted.

He went back to Florence twice more. The trucker and the little man worked for him twice more that October, and then Lev Simon was done with the horses forever. Then he bought the truck and paid the loan association and the rent until May, and the food, and settled at last with Michaelson.

Then he paid them all and after Christmas, in the January sales, he took his wife downtown.

That was the year they filled the living room.

Lev Simon studied the snapshots carefully, looking at each a long time, then putting them one behind the other as though he held a pack of cards.

"Some kid, huh, Pa?" Hub asked. He was alone with Lev Simon in the bedroom, sitting in the chair at the foot of the bed.

"Looks like you," Lev Simon said. He dropped the pack on the quilt and lay quietly. "Same as you are, Hub. One face, you two."

"I'll bet," Hub said, disbelieving, and then watched as his father lay still. He saw his father go a long way from the bed and thought Lev Simon was in Russia now, in the *dorf* they had all learned to know completely.

"Russia, Pa?" Hub said at last, smiling.

"What?" Lev came back to Hub and he grinned and Hub thought he blushed. "No, *kind*, not Russia. Not this time Russia. I think from Ben Baratz."

Hub shook his head. He was sitting with his legs crossed, his elbow on the arm rest, and his chin in his hand. "I won't even think of him," Hub said. "Pa, I hate that man. Do you know that? I never hated anyone in my whole life. But Baratz . . ." Hub grimaced. "You think of him too much," Hub said.

"He's in my life too much," Lev said. "I have that fellow in my life too long," he said, and he turned, looking at the windows, and Hub saw he was gone again. . . .

Lev Simon had gone down the back stairs after supper that

September night, moving carefully in the darkness, picking his way to the stable behind Nudelman's house. He wanted to change the hay on the floor of the barn for Nudelman, whose brother had died in Des Moines, and he pushed back on the sometime sliding door, stood with the moon at his back, trying to find the lamp as he reached in his pocket for matches, when someone said:

"Lev, *farmach*, close."

He stood motionless, the alley behind him, waiting for a bullet or the butt end of the rifle.

Ben Baratz said: "*Ich*, me, Berel," using his Yiddish name.

Lev couldn't find him in the darkness, but he knew there was trouble for him here in the barn and he made no move.

"*Farmach, farmach*," Ben Baratz urged hoarsely, and then behind him Lev Simon heard the door being pushed shut.

Felt it closing behind him; heard Baratz's footsteps; smelled the cigar on Baratz's breath and thought for an instant he should choke Baratz here in the barn, take the life out of him.

He thought to finish Baratz now before he heard the greetings from Baratz, whose car was not out on Colorado Street, who had not come to sit in the kitchen and drink tea.

"Nice place to say hello, Ben," Lev said.

He felt Baratz's hands on his arm and felt the smaller man pressing against him. "You saw somebody on the street, Lev? Police there on Colorado, or black cars, or detectives?"

"I don't look for detectives, Ben," Lev said, standing against the door, Baratz's hands on his arm. "Detectives don't need me, Ben."

"Oy, oy, oy, oy, oy," Ben said, and he was trembling. "Oy, oy, oy, oy," he said, and his voice broke there in the darkness of the warm, hay-smelling barn as he held tight to Lev Simon.

"All right, Ben, hold yourself," Lev Simon said. "Hold yourself a minute."

He moved away from the door, Baratz holding him, and Lev

found the lamp, struck a match, set the lamp back on the shelf beyond the stall. The horse moved about in the stall, and Baratz looked wildly from one side of the barn to the other.

He went to the door and listened and then returned to Lev Simon, held his arm again, peered up at him in the dull light. "They got Meyer Glansman tonight, suppertime," he whispered.

"Glansman I don't know," Lev said.

"Him from who I buy the alcohol," Ben said. "Took him suppertime, maybe a hundred police there on Winifred Street. The barrels through the windows and searchlights on the house. Took him from the table, Lev, oy, oy, oy, oy. . . ."

"Hold yourself, Ben," Lev said. He had it now, all right; he needed to ask no further questions. "Ben, hold yourself," he said, and took Baratz's wrists in his hands, squeezed the wrists hard, shaking the man's arms roughly.

Ben Baratz swallowed once and twice, and Lev could hear him moaning in the barn. Lev Simon stepped away from him, found the rusty drinking cup hanging on the wall. He dipped it into the pail of water beside the stall and gave it to Ben Baratz full in the face.

He watched Baratz stagger from the effect of the water, his hands to his eyes, and Lev Simon stood before him, waiting.

Lev listened to the man as he moaned, as an animal groans in pain, and then at last, tiring of the scene, readied himself, and as Baratz took his hands from his face, his shoulders bent, the body trembling, and looked up, Lev Simon struck him full in the face with his open hand.

He struck him, driving Baratz backward, and followed him, one hand out to touch Ben's shoulder. "Nu, Ben," he said quietly. "Nu, Ben, what?" he asked gently. "Hold yourself a minute and tell me what."

Baratz's legs touched the bale of hay and he stumbled and plopped down on it and sat there.

"They took Glansman," he said. "That one who cooks, Lev, from who I buy alcohol."

"Nu."

"Maybe they watched me; I was there in the morning."

"Where are your bottles?" Lev asked.

"Bottles." Ben Baratz looked up at Lev now. "I dumped them *three* hours ago under the High Bridge. I don't even have wine in the house."

"Then what do you worry?"

"Maybe they saw me, maybe they want me."

"For what?" Lev asked. "Why do they need you?" Sarah would worry that he was gone so long, he thought. "Do they have proof with you?"

"Proof," Ben Baratz said, and he rose. He got a cigar out of his pocket, tore the cellophane from it, and lit it after biting off the opposite end. "They can take me too."

Lev Simon breathed deep once. "So why are you here with me?" he asked.

Ben Baratz came up close and he looked up at Lev. "Let me hide a week," he said. "There in the attic. Your attic, Lev, let me hide there a week. Nobody knows. My car is home and Ruth tells anybody I took a train to North Dakota yesterday. Yesterday, yet," he said.

"Why me?" Lev asked. "My house full of babies. Why by me, Ben?" And he knew why, all right.

"Where else?" Ben asked. "To who else? If you come to me do I chase you?" he asked.

"You are citizen, Ben," Lev said quietly.

"Ah . . ."

"I don't hide by you. I'm in the open by you," Lev reminded him. "For three days in your house and no attic. For you I came from Ellis Island; you don't know then how I came, remember we made this up, Ben?"

"Your own brother-in-law," Baratz reminded him. "Your *blut*, blood," he said.

Lev Simon had the pitchfork and he thought: One second and I am finished with these payments to my own brother-in-law. He bent for the hay and, spreading it, nudging the horse over to the side of the stall with his shoulder, he thought: Once and finished and drop him there by the High Bridge with his alcohol. Once and an end to my payments and finished my payments, but he spread the hay and turned to Ben Baratz.

"And Ruth?" he asked.

"Ruth knows," Baratz said. "I told Ruth." He winked. "Ruth will come to me when I am hungry," he said. "Like Russia," he reminded Lev Simon, who remembered when Ben Baratz had been twenty-one, called up for military service and hiding in the attic.

Lev had been courting Sarah then, and Ben lay in the attic, brought there by Ruth, for her father, Lev's father-in-law now, was the most respected Jew in the *dorf*, the wealthiest, the Jew on best terms with the Russians, with the military provost, and even with access on occasion to the home of the governor of the province. Many young men had hidden then in attics, waiting for the guide, the smuggler, who for twenty rubles would take them in three days to the Rumanian frontier—and then America—where there were no four years of service to the Czar.

There Ruth had brought him food and sat with him through the days, a small, dark, long-gowned woman who had promised that her father would make Ben a merchant in a neighboring town. Would promise anything to keep the short young man with the knowing eyes and the black, thick hair.

"You cannot leave me, Ben," she said. "I will die here, this much you know. I'll die here."

"We'll be all right," he said in Yiddish. "My word," he said. They were alone in the attic, Ben on the cot, smoking, his head

against the wall and his feet crossed. "My word, Ruth, we will be all right." What did he need her for? he wondered.

"No, Ben," Ruth said, and her hands were busy working. She was afraid and she could not believe they would be together. She knew Ben and she knew the women and how the women liked him. He would be in America alone and he would never send for her.

"I will send for you," he said. "Of course I'll send for you," and he began to talk to her, saying what she wanted to hear, until her face flushed, and then he moved over on the cot and reached for her arm. He held her wrist and pulled her easily until she sat on the cot, on the edge of the mattress, and he touched her shoulder and could feel himself getting excited.

"Everything will be good for us, Ruth," he said. Maybe I'll get her now, he thought. My God, he thought, maybe I can get her, here in her own house. I'll get her here in her attic. He felt her shoulder beneath her dress and held her arms, both of his hands on her arms while she bent her head.

Before she knows what I'm doing, before she realizes, Ben thought, and moved his legs, twisting his body so he was turned to her. He held her arms and then put his hand behind her back.

At her elbows where the sleeve ended he touched her arm with his thumbnail, the thumb bent so that she felt only the nail. "All right, Ruth," he said, and he moved his hand on her back and the thumbnail started down her arm. He could feel the hair on her arm. He felt her give, and he heard her say: "Oh-oh-oh-h-h-h-h-h-h-h!" and then she moaned once and twice. He pushed her toward him until at last she lay with her head on his chest, quiet now, and one arm thrust over him, this girl whom only Ben had kissed. "All right, Ruth," he said, and he stroked her hair with one hand and then he bent forward and kissed her hair. He kissed her hair again and he could feel himself getting excited. He moved the thumb up and down her arm and then held her wrist an

instant, found her fingers, and kissed each finger, touching the fingers with his tongue.

She hid her face in his chest and he whispered: "Do you know how beautiful you are?"

"I am not beautiful."

"Do you know how beautiful you are?" he asked. "How lovely you are? Do you realize there is not a man in the village who doesn't envy me? Do you know how beautiful and good and sweet and how much I need you? Need you?"

"Ben, no."

"Want you and need you. My God, Ruth, yes, need you." He moved his hand, holding her with the other arm, and put his fingers on her thigh, there over the dress, his fingers digging into the dress. He remembered she was a virgin, and he thought: So if she is a virgin. So I'll get her ready for her husband. She'll know what it's for, all right, when she's married.

He felt her there beneath his fingers, and she felt his hand. He touched her knee, bunching the dress, getting the cloth up above her knee, and then he touched her calf and moved his hand up, above the stocking, until he could feel the corset digging into her flesh, and then he touched her skin. Her skin was on fire. My God, she's burning up, he thought.

He kissed her forehead and her eyes and her cheek, and his fingers were fumbling. He moved, moving her with him until she lay at his side, and then he had turned her and had the dress up, she with her eyes closed, her mouth open, breathing as though she had run up a hill, and her head turning.

He saw her head turning from side to side, his fingers busy now with his trousers, and he was talking to her. "Beautiful," he said. "Oh, you are beautiful," he said, and her skin was on fire beneath his hands. Burning up, my God, she's burning up; my God, I've got one here, all right, haven't I?

He pulled, pulled, pulled at his trousers, and then they were

down below his knees, and he was whispering to her. "I love you," he said, "I love you. I love you. I love you."

"Ben."

"I love you."

"Ben. OH! OH! OH! BEN! Be-e-e-e-n-n-n-n!"

My God, look at her, he thought. God, look at her, what have I got here? God, was there ever anything like this? Look at her. Here, then. Here, then, here, here, here!

"Ben. Oh! Ben. Oh! Ben. Ben. Ben. Ben."

He could feel the sweat and he could feel his shoe coming loose, swinging on his heel, and then it fell and then—he never heard the door open—Ruth's mother screamed.

He didn't want to marry her even then. Nothing had happened, he told himself. Not even finished, he told himself; what in hell did he have to marry her for?

But in the weeks before they left for America, after the Balta doctor had done his chore, they met secretly once and again, and then he couldn't get enough of her. Nor she of him.

There, beyond the synagogue, at dusk, down below the riverbank, they would rush at each other, pulling at each other, and he had her there. He had her in the leaves and in the carriage in her father's barn and once in the basement, and then at last he agreed to marry her. The dowry was big enough now, and he thought: What difference, this one as well as another one, and who can do it like her? Nobody in the world like her, that's for certain, and now in the barn, remembering her, he could still get excited.

He smiled at Lev Simon, who remembered the attic in Russia. "If I need her, I'll have her." Ben smiled.

The barn was cold and Ben waited for Lev Simon. He watched Lev Simon and he smiled at him. "Maybe a week, Lev. At the most a week," he said.

Lev Simon held the pitchfork, the tines against the floor of the

barn, and he watched Baratz, and then he pushed the handle away from him, saw it swing against the wall and rest there.

"A week," he reminded Ben Baratz, and wanted to hit himself. Standing with Baratz in the barn, he wanted to beat his head with his fists, strike himself, pull flesh from his face, and then he shivered once. He shook himself once and nodded at Baratz.

"We'll go through the front," he said. "The kids shouldn't see." The attic door was beyond the front hall.

"I'll say hello to Joe, to Hub," Ben protested, and then Lev turned to him.

"My sons, no," he hissed. "My sons you leave alone, Ben. My sons owe you nothing, you hear me? My sons are not Russians and not Jews here in America, Ben. Joe, Hub, Marty, the baby, Hy, them you leave alone, Ben, or maybe I call police myself, and maybe I bring the police and I go with you to jail, you hear, damn me?"

Baratz raised his hand. "Shah, Lev," he said. "Shah, mister, I don't need your sons. Shah, please, I don't want your sons."

Lev Simon nodded. "Nu, all right." He nodded once again. "All right, understand this from me, Ben: My sons stay far away from. My sons keep your hands away from and don't touch," he warned.

He blew out the light and led Baratz around the barn, down the side of the house, and in the darkness up the stairs. He climbed the ladder to the attic, Baratz following, and there struck a match, found the candle, and led Ben to the old metal bed under the eaves.

"Wait an hour till they sleep," he told Baratz, who took off his jacket, hung his hat on the bedpost. "I'll bring tea," he said.

Ben Baratz stretched out on the bed, his hands clasped under his head. "Like when you came to take me to the doctor." Ben grinned, and Lev Simon, thinking of that night, remembered that Baratz had not grinned then, could only smile when he was safe,

could laugh when the danger had passed, and in danger became nothing.

He had taken Ben Baratz, for Ruth was desperate for Ben, and Sarah had asked Lev to do this for her sister. You came at night through an alley, then into a basement, two houses from the doctor's. The doctor was there waiting, wearing a long, black, caracul-collared coat, holding the lancet.

The doctor punctured the eardrum, did that small chore for fifty rubles. The Czar was then very particular about his soldiers, and a punctured eardrum meant rejection. Lev Simon saw the doctor as they came into the basement, standing beside a chair on which rested a bottle of disinfectant and a box of swabs and a candle. The doctor waited, well back from the door, and a servant opened it for Ben Baratz and for Lev.

The servant closed the door quickly behind them and put his back to it and watched them, the two young men. Lev said: "Him. Ben Baratz."

"Don't tell me," the doctor said.

"A friend . . ."

"I don't care," the doctor said. "I don't know you and I don't know your friend. You are strangers to me, do you understand?"

"Yes," said Baratz. "We were sent——"

"No," the doctor said.

"We have money," Lev said.

"No, shut up," the doctor said. "Don't talk here. Can't you stop talking, man? I don't know you. I don't know him," and he pointed at Baratz. Ben didn't see the doctor, nor did he hear him, for Ben watched the lancet, saw only the blade and the black hair on the doctor's hand and the tiny tufts of black hair on the doctor's fingers.

"Tell me nothing of yourself," the doctor said, "and you don't know me. You don't know——" He stopped at that instant, his head high, his chin up, and the servant froze against the door,

his arms spread against the wood. Ben Baratz reached for Lev's wrist as they heard the hoofs in the alley. Ben Baratz began to weep. He wept softly and he held Lev's arm with both hands now.

"Ben, easy," Lev said, wanting the man's hands off him, ashamed of Baratz before the doctor. He would not like this either, that blade in his ear, but one minute and it was over.

"Takes a minute, Ben," he said.

"Lev, let's go from here."

"One minute, Ben."

"Lev . . ." Ben dropped to his knees now and he held Lev's leg with his hands, his head against Simon's thigh, and the doctor took one step forward and with his free hand covered Baratz's mouth, jerking him first to his feet and then covering the mouth.

He will kill us both, Baratz thought. This is a Jew, this doctor, but a killing Jew, and Baratz remembered the chickens, remembered watching the rabbi cut the chicken's throats in orthodox fashion, and he felt the blade across his throat now. The doctor covered Baratz's mouth until the sound of hoofs had softened and finally left the room before he took his hand away. Baratz turned to Lev, his face in Simon's shoulder, holding him as a woman might.

The doctor spun him around and slapped Baratz's face. "Get him out of this room," he ordered.

Baratz turned back to Lev, holding him, and Lev said to the doctor: "Keep your hands, please."

"Out!"

"Cut him, Doctor," Lev said, one arm free on Baratz, who wept on his shoulder. He reached in his pocket and dropped the money on the doctor's chair. "All right, cut him," he said.

"Out, both of you," the doctor said, and he spoke in Russian to the servant, who came forward, holding a gun. The doctor had dropped the lancet on the chair and stood behind it now, holding

the back with his hands. "I don't help you now," the doctor said.

"Yes, you will help," Lev said.

"Out of here." The doctor took the money and threw it at Lev, and the bills separated and dropped to the ground.

"Fix him," Lev said.

The doctor spoke to the servant, who had come forward, the gun pointing at Lev, and the doctor watched the pair.

"If you kill us," Lev said. "So, if you kill us, then what? Then you have two murders, Doctor. If we leave, this one goes to the army next month and he reports the doctor."

"You bastard," the doctor said.

"Fix him."

"You dirty Jew bastard, you."

"Ah . . ." Lev said. He was sick of Baratz and sick of the doctor and the servant with the gun was a dumb, stupid Russian and he wanted to be out of here now. He reached over for the lancet and handed it to the doctor. "All right, fix him."

The candle flickered and the light almost perished, but Lev picked up the candle and handed it to the servant. "Nu, Doctor," he said. "Finish it. Finish it."

The doctor reached Baratz, and the servant's arm came forward holding the candle. Lev Simon saw the lancet moving and then he turned his head, standing beside Baratz so Ben could hold him. Baratz moaned once and then screamed, once and again until Lev turned to him, holding Ben's mouth.

"Get out of here now," the doctor said. "Out of here," and he pointed at the door which the servant held scarcely open.

Lev saw the lancet dripping blood and put his arm about Ben, leading him out of the room.

Lev wrapped Ben's ear with a heavy shawl and at the railroad station he bought a bottle of vodka for Ben. They sat up through the night, Baratz taking the seat at the window and drinking the vodka.

"That *schwein*," he said.

"Who?"

"The doctor, the *schwein*."

"Well—he's afraid."

"I hope they catch him."

"Ah—Ben."

"Catch him, the butcher."

"You are out of the army, Ben."

"Just for Ruth. Do you think I would let them do this to me for myself?"

You begged for the doctor, Lev remembered. *Begged* me to find a doctor. "I don't know, Ben."

"What do you think, I'm afraid of an army? Of the Czar's soldiers, let them fry in hell, the *schwein*. I'd have gone straight to America."

"That's the place, all right."

"Same as everywhere," Baratz said. "*Goyim*. What do you think, Lev?"

"Ben, I'll tell you something." He watched Baratz take a drink from the bottle. "I get big down there when I think of America. To me, this is the end of the world, this is garden of Eden for me. To be a man there, to go to school; Ben, they go to school there! To live alone and no Czar, to choose their leaders, Ben, makes me excited to talk about this America."

"Why don't you go?"

"Ah—my family. Sarah, she's afraid. I have a good job—someday."

"I'll go," Baratz boasted. "Watch, I'll go. Let me finish with this Czar's army and I go."

"Yes."

In the *dorf* Ben had been examined the next month and marked unfit.

Standing over him now in the attic, Lev remembered Baratz

coming home with the yellow rejection paper, but the next year the doctor was gone and no physician would lance ears and Lev Simon was marked fit.

He remembered that he wanted then, in those six weeks remaining before induction, to leave for America, but his family said to stay and his mother wept, his father advised him no and Sarah was sick at the prospect. She would wait for him here, she said, married when he came back, and he had not gone.

Standing over Baratz now, Lev Simon thought that if he had come then there would have been only the guard at the Russian border, not ten guards to bribe, and one here in his bed, in his attic, with his sons sleeping below.

"I'll be back in an hour, Ben," Lev said.

"All right," Baratz said, and he turned for a moment, reached into his pocket, and flipped a half dollar at Lev Simon. "Bring me two cigars, Lev," he ordered. "Any kind, just so two for a half; I can't smoke others," and he looked away from Lev Simon, lying on his back, staring at the ceiling, his ankles crossed. having dismissed the man at his side.

What he had, what Hy Simon owned, what you could see at once in his eyes always and in his smile, was a humility and a warmth, a compassion and a regard for human frailty that could explain away and condone and forgive any mortal sin.

He was a medic from the day he was born, with those eyes and with his heart, and yet he was a man. He'd had a touch with animals as a kid; they followed him all over Colorado Street and Robert Street, and waited, dogs and cats, in packs before the garage behind the house on Colorado Street; and this touch, this magic, stayed with him in his teens.

There was no night that the telephone didn't ring three times from three different young women, and he was gentle and kind to all.

And took those that he could handle, and was sorry and warm and hurt for those he could not.

An angel, this Hy Simon at eighteen, of all the sons most like his father, and of all of them, the most loved by the others.

He was in Lev Simon's bedroom now with the others, his arms around Hub, pulling his older brother to him, smiling, the eyes warm and delighted.

"You look wonderful, Hub. Gee, you look swell. Pleasure to have you. How's Helen?" he asked. "The baby, how is he, Hub? Gee, you ought to be proud. I'm proud. Way out here in St. Paul and never saw the baby and I'm proud. You're happy. You're happy out there, aren't you, Hub?"

Marty shook his head, grinning at Hy. He was lying down beside Lev Simon in the double bed, his hands clasped behind his head, his feet hanging over the side.

"The con man," Marty said. "Listen to the con artist, Joe."

"He's the champ," Joe said.

Hy grinned at them and released Hub. He cupped his hands and blew into them, warming them, and then he came to the bed and, leaning over, took his father's wrist. He held the wrist and looked down into Lev Simon's eyes and he spoke to his father as men speak to their wives in the darkness of their room.

"Hello, Pa," he said while Lev Simon grinned for his son. Hy held the wrist, his forefinger at the pulse, and looked into his

father's eyes and he said: "Have a good day? Did you rest, Pa?

"You look fine, Pa," he said, and he might have been making his rounds in the hospital, standing beside the bed of a mother who six hours before had delivered her first child. "I'm happy with the way you look, Pa," and he dropped the wrist, reached behind him to find his father's foot, touch the ankle and the toes and feel for circulation.

"Hello, kid," Lev Simon said, and he thought: Nu, did something. I did something here with my life. Nu, shouldn't complain now with my own doctor holds my feet and my other doctor lays here in my bed.

Nu, he thought, and then wanted to stop thinking, wanted to be with these four forever, wanted to visit Joe in New York, sit with Joe in a restaurant, and have Joe pick up the check; wanted to hold his grandchild and diaper his grandchild as he had diapered and washed diapers for his four sons.

Nu . . .

"Enough, Hy," he said, and moved his feet, and Hy bent then to tuck the blanket under his father's legs. He sat down on the edge of the bed, his arm over the thin, white, veined legs.

"I saw Ben Baratz, Pa," he said.

Marty sat up. "Where? I suppose *you* talked to him. You're stupid enough to talk to him."

"Mart, take it easy." He patted Marty's leg. "I was coming down Summit just now, past St. Thomas, and he passed me. Driving a brand-new Chrysler. They've just been out a week."

"A blue car," Lev Simon said. "Always drives blue."

"He passed me and he waved to me."

"And you waved back," Joe said. "Hy, what's the matter with you?"

"Oh, Joe. What am I going to do?"

"You can spit at him, that's what you can do," Marty said. He got out of the bed. "You sap. Waving at him."

"Oh, Mart . . ."

"How do you like these guys, Joe?" Hub said. He was leaning against the chest of drawers, arms folded on his chest. "Driving to school in his own car. How's that for going to school, Joe?"

"Rich man's son," Joe said, winking at his father. "They've got a rich old man. When we went to school, we hitchhiked."

"Yeah," Lev remembered, nodding, "you two hitchhike. Once a week maybe, hitchhike. *Maybe* once a week. Rest of the time *my* car."

"All right." Joe grinned. "We didn't have a car of our own."

"Some car," Lev said. "A model Ford, more dead than she runs. Some big car."

"We didn't have it," Hub said, enjoying this now. "We had a truck when we were kids."

"Not even that," Joe said. "Orange boxes and sit in the back, while these two were up front," he said.

"Orange boxes, eh?" Marty said. "Pa told me once about those orange boxes."

"Enough, Marty," Lev Simon said, and raised his hand to silence the boy, and then they were all silent, Hub and Joe sick with the memory and with themselves, and Lev Simon wanting to clear it from his head, as always he could leave unpleasantness behind, discard it and walk away from it.

"Enough, Marty," Lev ordered. "You hear me, Marty?" and the boy sat down on the bed, but all of them were together now, removed from the room, back on Colorado Street in that spring when he bought the truck.

It was a long, narrow vehicle behind the small cab, with sides maybe two feet high. Marty sat between his father and mother, Sarah held Hy, an infant, and Joe and Hub had to ride behind—and wouldn't. They were ashamed. Were made fun of by the gang on the corner gathered around the arc light.

Hated the truck, and the orange boxes, and the gibes of their gang.

Dreaded the rides in that late spring.

Envied their gang's fathers who had Fords and Chevrolets, sedans.

Lev Simon was proud. He owned a truck. Now he could take his family for a ride, drive them all the way out into the country, all the way to Mendota, beyond Cherokee Heights, into Dakota County, if he wanted, five, ten, sometimes fifteen miles from Colorado Street.

Some America, that spring.

He had a truck and he made his living peddling.

Owned his truck.

After supper sometime he would go out into Clinton Avenue, which ran into Colorado Street, sit on the retaining wall across the street with Eli Ramaley, the Syrian section hand, the two of them in their undershirts, both tanned to the elbows and their necks tanned, and both watching their sons play softball.

Lev Simon, who couldn't tell you where home base was, but yelling and cheering and rooting when Joe hit one up to the next corner, to Delos Street; the ball rolling into the open doors of the fire barn, and Joe running around the bases, Eli Ramaley yelling just as loud.

Some America, all right.

No ball game this one night. This night Lev Simon was taking his family for a ride.

Lev Simon hung the dish towel over the sink and reached for Hy, feeling the diaper.

"We'll take a ride," Lev said. "While there's light still. Around Cherokee Heights.

"Ice cream later," he said, and Joe and Hub on the tiny rear porch wanted to run, but their father stood in the doorway holding Hy. "Sarah," Lev said, "come for a ride."

"Not me," Joe said. "I'm not going."

"I'm tired," Hub said. "I'll read," he said.

Sarah stepped away from the stove. "I'll fix my hair," she said.

"Gee, you're tired," Joe said to his father. "What do you want to go for a ride now, when you worked all day? On that truck since four o'clock this morning. You ought to be sick of that truck."

Lev Simon set Hy back into the high chair. He reached for his shirt and pushed it down inside his trousers. "Not me," he said. "I not tired of the truck. My sons are tired of this truck."

"Ah . . ." Joe said. "Ah, what're you talking about?"

"'Bout my sons," Lev said. He was annoyed with them now. He didn't expect much of them, but they should remember the horse, just once, remember the empty living room once. "'Bout my sons," he said. "My two special sons."

Lev sat down and watched Marty on the floor. "Some kid, Marty," he said. "Marty's not tired of my truck."

Sarah came out of the bathroom, her hands to her hair. "Lev," she said. "Before it's too dark," she urged.

Lev pointed at the pair in the doorway leading to the porch. "They'll stay, they say."

She had Hy in her arms. "Enough, Joe," she said. "Herbert. No arguments with you tonight. In the truck."

Joe came into the kitchen and stood up against the stove. "I'm not going. I don't have to go if I don't want to, and I'm not going."

Hub, who had been watching his brother, suddenly darted to his side. "Me neither."

"Fine," she said. "All right, fine. You both stay here tonight. You stay here Saturday. No movies Saturday and no baseball Saturday."

"Pa!" Joe said. Lev watched him, and to the boy it seemed that his father was accusing him of stealing, or striking him, or

failing in school. His father looked to Joe as though it were the middle of winter and no vegetables to sell and the railroads not hiring.

"Pa, what?" Lev asked. "What do you want from Pa, Joe, and you, Hub?" He stood up and pulled on his trousers. "I think you come now, Joe, and you, Hub, and I think maybe you stop talking for tonight. I think maybe I'm little sick from your talking."

They could argue with her. With Sarah they'd argue and talk and make trades and end up with part of what they wanted. Lev Simon never argued. Either it was yes with him—to anything they wanted—or it was like now, there in the kitchen. They were all going for a ride.

Joe ran out ahead and Hub followed, down the steps and into the back yard. There's the dirty old truck up against the garage, Joe said to himself. Crummy old truck. He went into the garage and got the empty orange crate and threw it over the side. Hub pulled the chain tight around the tail gate and hooked it and they climbed in, sitting somberly together, ready to be driven to the guillotine.

They saw Benny St. Germaine standing there across the street against the retaining wall, watching and grinning. They saw Louis Michangelo, shaking his arm up and down, as though he held Lev Simon's bell in his hand, ringing for the customers.

Louis and Benny, Frank Tilden, Sam Solloway, Ozzie McCabe, all of them, and they wanted to run from the truck, from the garage, from the house, from the gang waiting there across the street to give it to them.

"Go for a ride with the old man," Lev said. He was standing beside them now. "Hah, Joe? Hub? Give a little pleasure the old man, go for a ride with him?"

"Yeah."

He opened the door for Sarah, who carried Hy. Marty was in the front already. He slammed the door behind them, then stopped

beside Joe as he came around the truck. "All right, Joe?" he asked.

"Sure."

"Hub?"

"Yes."

"Please, boys. One favor."

They waited.

"Don't be so happy here in my truck. Both so happy I can't stand it," he said.

He left them then. When the truck came out of the drive Joe was praying Lev would turn away from Colorado Street toward the fire barn, but he turned to the right and came down toward the corner slowly, the horn sounding at the gang who were standing now beneath the arc light, lined up there at the curb, two of them pretending they were sounding Lev Simon's bell, and the others pointing at the boys in the truck. The brothers stared down at the floor of the truck, wouldn't turn to see them now, and Joe thought of the movies Saturday. He tried to think of the softball game and of all the good things he could remember, and then at last they were out on Robert Street, heading for the Heights.

Why doesn't he let us alone? Joe thought. Can't he understand? Doesn't he know how we feel back here? Doesn't he know?

Joe couldn't hide. He couldn't lie flat on the floor of the truck, although at one point Hub sat smack up against the wall of the cab, his legs drawn up and his arms about them, his chin down on his knees.

When they returned at last, Joe jumped off the truck before it even stopped rolling. Hub behind him, they ran up the stairs, Joe kneeling to get the key from under the mat on the porch floor, then into the house.

In the darkness they went through the kitchen and into the

dining room, brushing aside the curtain which hid their bed. They undressed in the dark and got into bed.

Lev Simon helped put Marty to bed, and Hy. He sat in the kitchen while his wife was in the bedroom and drank a glass of lemonade. He started for his room and then, his shirt unbuttoned and hanging outside of his trousers, turned and went into their bedroom.

They heard his footsteps, heard him coming into the room. They heard him dragging the chair over from the chest of drawers and he said: "Pull the light, Joe."

They were quiet.

"Joe, pull please the light. Hub. Pull."

"I'm sleepy, Pa," Joe said.

He reached over and they could hear him fumbling for the chain and then he said: "Ah . . . ah," and they heard him get up from the chair and leave them.

They could not remember when he had gone to bed without kissing them.

This was a Wednesday. On Saturdays in early spring Lev Simon finished his route, his merchandise sold, his truck empty, sometime between three and four o'clock.

On Saturday Hub followed Joe and the gang down the West Side to the Minnetonka playgrounds near the airport for a double-header.

They played two games and then came up State Street slowly, walking in the road, tired and hot and sweaty and happy, Joe playing catch with Louis Michangelo, when Frank Tilden saw them, rode up to them on his bike, the carrier across the handle bars filled with meat packages which he delivered for his father.

"How'd you guys do?" he asked.

"We split," Joe said.

"Hey, I just come from Wabasha Street," he said. "Hey, what ya think I saw?" He had everybody around him now, one foot

dragging on the ground while he straddled the bike. "Hey, what ya think I saw?"

"All right, what?" somebody asked.

"Joe's pa." He pointed at Hub. "Hub's pa, his truck an' all, and pickin' rags."

Joe didn't know what to do. He was so angry then he couldn't do anything. That was about the lowest, pickin' rags. They all followed the rag peddlers when they'd come down Colorado Street, and now Frank saying it. Hub was holding Joe's first baseman's mitt and he threw it at Frank, at his face. Joe held the ball and he threw the ball at Frank. He ran at Frank and hit him in the face. Hub bent for rocks as Joe knocked Frank off the bike, Frank falling and the bike tipping, the meat spilling, Hub with a handful of rocks waiting to get a clear shot at Frank's head. Louis Michangelo grabbed Hub and held him, Joe swinging wildly at Frank, and Ozzie McCabe sprawling over the two on the ground, Joe kicking and punching, trying to claw and bite, somebody ripping Joe's shirt. Joe swung at all of them, pulled Hub away from Louis, and they turned, cutting across the street, down the hill, running toward the meadow, and Hub was crying, the tears caking the dirt on his face.

Joe didn't believe him, damn him, that Frank Tilden. That liar, that Tilden. They came up over the railroad tracks and Joe took Hub's hand, leading him across the tracks.

There was no word said between them. They didn't believe Frank and didn't want to go, but they skirted Colorado Street, running across the empty lot, past the sausage factory on Robert Street and behind the nuns' house on Livingston Avenue, down once more and then on Wabasha.

They crossed the small bridge over the creek, neither of them talking, and Joe was praying: Don't be there, Pa. Just don't be there, please, Pa, don't be there. Please, Pa, don't, he prayed, and they turned around the curve, where the mushroom caves

ended. The first thing they saw was the truck parked inside the junk yard.

All the bushels piled up and the tail gate down and they could smell the truck. There, in the big yard, off to one side, sitting on an orange box, was their father in the sun.

They walked to him together, standing before him together, and he looked up, squinting in the sun, his neck red from the sun, and he grinned. "'Allo, boys," he said.

He was all dirt and sweat. His hair was wet with sweat and all matted and far back from his forehead. There was dirt and tar on his fingers and wrists and there was dust on his shoes. Hub saw he had his handkerchief wrapped around his right hand and knew Lev had cut himself.

"Pa," Hub said, and knelt before him.

There was a mess of wire before Lev Simon, and he had a knife in his hands and he was scraping the wire cover from the copper underneath.

"Hub," he said.

They were not ashamed now, but they could not understand, and he knew they could not understand and then he said: "Go look there in the truck."

They saw then. Two gray mohair seats, thick and soft, out of some once-expensive old car.

They *knew* it then, understood it. The truck hadn't changed for them, but that he would work thus, in a rag yard, only for them.

Joe threw the glove on a seat and they came back to Lev Simon and stood there. Then Hub ran to the small shack at the corner of the yard and returned with two more knives.

They sat flanking him, each on a corner of the orange box, and Lev said: "Figure ap, can't be mad with my sons."

Joe wanted to die as Lev spoke. *He* apologizing.

"Figure ap, have to do the best for my sons.

"Told Ma must have fine seats for my sons."

"Pa, stop," Joe said.

Lev Simon picked up a piece of wire. "Can't afford it to pay for seats, so work for seats."

"Pa, stop."

"No shame," Lev said. "No shame here in America.

"Got two sons, princes both," Lev said, "must have special seats." He looked from one to the other, and there was this much clay on his feet. Very little, just this much.

"No orange box for my princes. Special kind seats," he said, and reached for the wire.

Lev Simon could not bear to see hurt on his children; could not watch them weep or see them in pain.

He took Hub to the dentist once and, sitting in the waiting room, he heard the boy cry out. From fear, not from pain. Lev Simon ran out into the hall, down the hall to the stairs, wouldn't wait for the elevator. He came down the six flights to the street and in a drugstore called the dentist's nurse, told her to send Hub back to the truck when he was finished.

Marty had asthma when he was a kid. He had asthma, he had hay fever, he had sinus. When Marty got it good, on those nights when Sarah would bed him down on the living-room couch so that the boy would have more air, Lev Simon sat with his son.

He wouldn't sleep. He'd sit with the boy, holding Marty's hand,

and he'd tell his son stories, talk through the night, tales of Odessa and the Black Sea, the market places; stories of his own father and his brothers; of Kafkaz, where Lev Simon had done two years for the Czar's army; of Kharkov with its forty times forty churches; of St. Petersburg in the snow; of his, Lev's, uncle, who would take a horse cross-country, riding the animal until it burst, riding three days and three nights; of Antwerp's sidewalk cafés in the morning sun and the diamond merchants holding the stones between their fingers, pushed up against the knuckles, buying and selling there beside the washed streets.

Until at last the boy slept and then he, Lev Simon, would stretch and take a cold bath, shave and dress once more, and out to the truck and down to the market.

He couldn't wake them when they slept. Would come into their bedroom to take them but see them curled and soft, hugging pillows, and then move among them, tucking blankets over them.

He needed them and still could not ask them to help; would not; felt he had no right to ask them.

That summer, the year Joe graduated from high school, he'd had the store three months. He'd rented the empty building in April, couldn't go back to the truck, to the hand bell summoning customers for another season, to the long winters.

There was this small place on Smith Avenue in Cherokee Heights, the one shopping street, and he talked with Sarah. He was afraid. There would be licenses to get and questions and maybe something about being a citizen, but she said yes. She told him yes, he must, enough jumping up and down from the truck all day. She was never afraid, really, because she had him.

Joe had six hundred dollars in insurance for college and Lev took that. He went to the Jewish loan this one, last time, although he didn't think it, and got two hundred more. He took Sarah's ruby brooch and borrowed on that.

He built shelves himself and painted them at night with Joe

and Hub. He bought a cash register for five dollars on which none of the levers worked, but the drawer could open and shut.

He opened on a Saturday in April, with fruits and vegetables all over the store, on the sidewalks and in front and halfway back in the store, and he made money the first day, and he never stopped making money.

He needed them all with him on Saturdays that summer and they knew it, but only Hub could wake himself.

Lev Simon came into the bedroom at four that morning and Hub was dressing. Marty lay on his stomach in the double bed and Joe was mother-naked in the other bed.

"Some workers," Lev said, "eh, Hub?"

"Lazy. They're just lazy no-goods," Hub said.

"They all right."

"Wake them up," Hub said. "Come on, Pa, wake them."

"Well. They'll come later."

"Wake them," Hub hissed.

"Shah, Hub. They'll be later."

"They'll sleep until noon," Hub said. He rose from the bed, pulling on trousers. "Are you going to get them up?" he hissed, and saw his father watching the boys, smiling at them, and Hub leaned over and pulled the sheet from Marty, turned him, shook him; shook him and shook him until Marty opened his eyes, watching Hub above him with a pure, burning hatred.

"Come on," Hub said. "Sleep all day. Come on."

Marty came out of the bed in a rush, wanting to ruin this intruder; fourteen years old, and punching even then like a middleweight, and then he saw his father and grunted. He talked to no one in the morning.

"Look the king," Lev said of Joe.

That's all the two needed. They reached over and threw him from the single to the double bed.

While they dressed, Lev Simon squeezed them oranges, filling

the glasses for them, careful not to wake Hy, who would come later on the trolley with lunches for them.

Marty was all right after the orange juice. Then he talked. They trooped out to the truck, all of them shivering in the gray, cold, chilling morning, and Joe drove. Marty and Hub rode the fenders and Lev Simon sat back in his truck, holding Hub's hand against the door. About Marty's safety there, alongside Joe, he could only pray.

The market ran from Tenth Street to Twelfth, three blocks long, and from Jackson to Sibley. There were maybe fifteen sheds, roofs over cement islands, block-long affairs, like those car ports you see on modernistic houses.

The farmers would back their produce trucks up under these roofs, rear tires against the cement islands, and the customers came down the center of the islands inspecting, bidding, buying.

The market opened at four. From then until six the wares were bought, but not until then could a hamper or a bushel be moved. This was a city rule.

What did it were the strawberries. This was the tail end of the Minnesota season, and they were cheap and Lev Simon could sell them: He'd come down the island, pricing and haggling, and when he'd bought, Joe would write it on a piece of paper and Hub would take another piece, write SIMON on it, and slip it into one of the crates.

When the six o'clock whistle blew, Hub ran for the truck, waiting for Joe and Marty to bring the stuff. He loaded. They carried. Lev Simon walked around paying and seeing he got his merchandise. They had to get out of there, for the store opened at seven.

This was about six-fifteen. Lev Simon wanted the strawberries piled at the rear of the rig and so had left them for the last. He'd seen Joe and Marty loaded with bushels of tomatoes, watched

them start for the truck down on Thirteenth Street, and then walked over to the next shed for his berries.

He saw the fifteen crates of quarts in a pile but no SIMON slip among them and he said to the farmer: "Mister, my berries."

The farmer turned. He was about thirty-five and broad, not too tall, but like a truck across his chest. "In the truck." He jerked his thumb. "Back there," he said to Lev Simon, who had paid now for the berries.

Lev looked into the truck and saw fifteen crates, saw the floor wet with their juice, saw them crushed and battered, settling in the quarts, and he came back to the farmer.

"Mister," he said, "these here. These belong to me."

"Back," the farmer said. "Those in the truck."

"No, these," Lev Simon said, standing in the island, watching the farmer come toward him, feeling the people gathering about them. "These," he said, pointing at the crates. "These mine, all right. Paid for them," he said, grinning, trying to calm this farmer, humor him. "My slip here."

"You got no fugging slip. Show me the fugging slip," the farmer said, his arms spread and his hands at his sides. Lev Simon could see the sweat against the shirt, could see the hair on the farmer's chest where the shirt lay open to the coveralls.

Lev said: "Had a slip." He nodded twice. "Honest an' true, had a slip. Paid for *these* berries, all right."

The farmer pointed to the berries. Lev could smell the whisky the farmer had drunk in the market saloon. "Show me the slip," he said. "You paid for *them* berries," and jerked his thumb at the truck. "Your slip's up there," he said. "Go look."

Lev Simon didn't need to look. He'd find the slip there, all right. "You crook me," he said quietly.

"What?"

Lev nodded. "You crook me, mister," he said. He was frightened of this farmer, of these people, of the crowd, of the trouble

which might come, but these were his berries, there beside him.

Lev Simon turned to the circle about him and he tried to enlist them. "Honest an' true, I pay for these," he said, and then felt the farmer's huge hand on his shirt, felt the shirt being bunched up, turned his head, saw the farmer's fist coming, couldn't move, unable to turn away, and felt the blow high on his cheek, along the eye, felt the numbness and the pain going back into his eye and his head, and then was on the cement, sprawled on the cement, didn't know he had fallen, but turning, pushing himself up by his hands as though he were on a gymnastic mat, he began to shout.

"Joe!" he shouted as the farmer stood over him. "Joe! JOE! Hub! HUB! Marty! MARTY! JOE! JOE! JOE!"

He saw the farmer standing over him, fists ready, the arms moving, the man ready to beat him.

Joe heard him first. They were walking among the trucks, each with a bushel of tomatoes on his shoulder, and Joe stopped. He heard him again and he said: "PA! It's Pa!"

Marty turned, listened an instant, and got the tomatoes off his shoulder. Joe yelled for Hub once, and as they began to run, the tomatoes forgotten, Marty yelled for Hub, and then they were running, turning and twisting among the cars and the trucks and over bushels of produce, and then saw the circle around Lev Simon, didn't see their father, but just the crowd.

Joe was first, Marty at his side and behind. Hub had heard them and was two sheds beyond. Joe went through the crowd, saw in one horrible flash—the worst he had ever known—his father trying to get up off the cement and the farmer waiting, arms moving, and Joe turned and, turning, saw Marty, saw his face beet red now, and they both hit the farmer. They hit the farmer together, from each side.

He went back against the radiator of his truck, and then Joe pushed Marty aside and let go a shot at the farmer's stomach,

driving his left hand low and deep into the stomach. The farmer's arms went up into the air, and then Marty stepped in, fourteen years old, the shoulders sloping, tall and sleek, and he set himself and hit the farmer a right hand just to the left of the chin.

He drove the farmer's head back against the radiator cap and Marty said: "My father. You. My father," hit him with a right hand again. "Pa," he said, "PA!" and a left, working carefully, setting himself each time, his arms high, the punches coming out short as he had been taught at the Y.M.C.A., breathing through his nose while Joe and Hub held their father, lifted Lev Simon and supported him between them.

They watched for someone in the crowd to interfere, and Hub, the weakhearted, the tender one, shouted: "Who? Who else was in on this? Come on, who else was in! Come on, you, whoever touched him, you, all of you, come on!"

The cop pushed through at last, swung Marty around, and Hub left his father and held the cop's night stick. The cop holding Marty, who trembled, couldn't stop trembling, wanted to keep punching, wanted, actually, to kill the farmer, open his face and his head and punch him to shreds.

"All right," the cop said. "All right, all right," and tried to get his arm loose from Hub's grasp, and at last pulled himself free.

"All right," he said, "you," he said to the farmer, who held the handkerchief to his mouth, one eye shut, his nose bleeding and his mouth bleeding, and Marty wanted him once more, but Hub held him now, holding his brother's arm and pushing him back.

"My pa!" Marty said, and he broke loose and stood before the cop. "He hit my pa. *My pa!* My pa never touched anybody in his life, never raised his hand in his life, and this, this—this——" And then he began to sob and hit the farmer another right, the fist coming in against the handkerchief, driving the farmer's fingers against his teeth.

The cop grabbed Marty's shoulders, swung him around, pushed

him against Lev Simon, who held the boy, held him and pleaded with him to be quiet, stroking him, as a trainer gentles a thoroughbred.

Then at last the farmer, the cop, and Joe talked and finally Joe said: "All right, take us to court. Take us all, come on, all of us, and we'll sue this rat. Take us, come on," he challenged, and the cop said: "Go on. These are yours, then get them and beat it," and Marty broke loose from his father and wanted to go against the cop, this swine who challenged his father's word and his father's honesty, but Hub and Joe both got him and carried him, one holding his feet and the other the arms, carried him out between the sheds where Lev Simon begged his son to please, Marty, for me, please, no more trouble.

Joe and Hub got the berries; they wouldn't let Marty go. Lev Simon sat in the cab of the truck with Marty, his leg swung over Marty's knee, his arm about the boy's shoulders and his other hand pushing the boy's head against his chest, and Marty would not look at his father, couldn't look at the welt high on the cheek along the eye without getting sick within him and wanting the farmer.

Always they waited until they were in the store and there opened milk and ate the cookies Sarah kept behind the counter.

But Joe drove away from the market, Hub on the fender and Marty between the two in the front seat, and Lev Simon told him to stop at a diner there on Smith Avenue a block below the store.

They parked in front of the diner so they could watch the truck, and Lev Simon ordered them all pancakes and eggs and bacon.

He sat with them on the stools at the counter.

The counterman pointed at Lev's eye. "Little trouble, eh?" He grinned, and Marty rose from the stool then, wanting the counterman, too, but Lev said: "Marty.

"Marty," he said, "please."

The counterman backed off from the counter. "Jeez, I didn't mean nothing. Hey, I ain't mad at nobody, not me. Now, listen, boys, I'm friends with the world," he said, watching Marty's eyes.

Lev Simon put his arm about Marty. "'S all right," he said. "Just a little fight. My boys take care. These my boys, all," he said.

He had never expected anything from them. He had shouted for them without knowing what he did and had not expected it, as the farmer had not expected it.

But you could have taken a poll then, at that moment, asked Clark Gable or Mustafa Kemal or Alfred Lunt or Bill Dickey or Huey Long or Fulgencio Batista or Carol of Rumania in Rumania or Pablo Picasso or Mahatma Gandhi, asked each of them or all of them that morning how they were, how they felt, were they happy, and Lev Simon sitting at the counter with his sons, remembering it there in the market, would have given them all cards and spades *and* the good ten and been happier.

"All," Lev Simon said. "All of them, my boys.

"One more at home," he added for the counterman.

Joe carried the cup of hot milk carefully into Lev Simon's bedroom. There was a huge blob of butter floating on the surface.

Lev was high up in the bed, the barber having shaved him and gone. Marty and Hy had sponged him. He wore white silk pajamas, his hair was combed, and he looked very good, Joe thought.

Look at him, Joe thought. Can you believe it by looking at him? Get used to it, he's going. No. He's going, all right.

No.

Yes.

YES!

Yes, he's going. Yes. Yes, he is.

"For who the milk?" Lev Simon asked.

"Who do you think?"

"No." Lev Simon turned his head away, and Joe thought suddenly how like a child's the gesture seemed, a baby refusing to eat. "Hate milk," Lev said.

"Don't be a baby now," Joe said. He set the cup down on the night table. "The boys say it's good for you."

"Don't care what the boys say." Look at him, Joe thought, he's pouting. "Not doctors yet."

"Come on, now." Joe raised the cup.

"I don't drink milk, Joe." He turned his head away.

"I'll call the boys."

Lev Simon's eyes were stubborn and defiant. "Not afraid of them."

"Take a sip."

"Joe."

Joe set the cup down. "All right. It's your funeral."

Their eyes met then and Lev Simon nodded. "I know, kid. I know whose funeral."

"Oh, Pa." Why didn't he cut his own tongue out? Why didn't he tape his mouth before he could say this to his father?

Lev Simon smiled. "Shah, kid, shah. 'S all right, Joe."

"Oh, Pa."

"Ah—where the boys?"

"Hub's helping Ma with the clothes. Marty and Hy are throwing a football around out front."

"You go too," Lev suggested.

"I'm happy here."

"Go, Joe. Fresh air."

Joe smiled. "I'm all right here, Lev. My pleasure," Joe said.

"Thanks." Lev lay back into the pillows. "Thanks," he said.

After a moment Lev said: "You don't think you get married, Joe?"

"You starting that again? Sure, I'll get married."

Lev raised both hands from the quilt. "Like to know you married."

Joe was angry. "You'd have been happy to see me married to that Marion Strauss, wouldn't you?"

"Ah—she's not for you, that one."

"You never did forgive me for it."

"Forgive. You fool. I forgive you anything."

Joe wanted an argument now, wanted somehow to talk of this thing. "Not that, you didn't. Admit it."

"Admit," Lev said. "What, admit? You my son, no? Then whatever you do, I forgive. 'Sides, she married now."

Joe sat up in the chair. "No. Honest? How do you know? Are you sure?"

"Ma saw there in Jewish magazine. Married this summer."

"Christ, I'm glad to hear that."

Lev watched his son. "You feel bad for her, Joe, eh?"

"The truth?"

"Sure, the truth."

Joe leaned over on the chair, his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands, remembering all of it now, from start to finish.

Softly: "I never forgave myself. The nights I lay in bed living it."

His hands over his eyes. "Afterwards, you know. The nights I dreamed about it. In New York."

He ran his fingers through his hair, could not look at his father as he spoke.

"Like I'd ruined her." He shook his head. "Couldn't get it out of my mind, I'd ruined her. Prayed she'd get married have some kind of a life."

"Nu, she's married."

"I paid for it," Joe said. "As God is my judge, I paid."

Joe didn't enroll at the university until winter quarter. He worked with Lev Simon that fall, getting the store squared off, and when his father hired a clerk Joe went out to the university.

He was in the Union that Monday morning, having seen her the night before, talked with her, tried to calm her, held her, and, lying to her, comforted her, taken her promise that she'd trust him, keep this from her family.

He'd had an eight-thirty and a nine-thirty class and then, in the hour before lunch, stood now in the Union billiard room watching a snooker game. Looking up from the table, Joe saw Berel Strauss enter, saw him searching the room, wanted to get under the table, crawl away, hide, leave the campus and the city and never be found or seen or heard from again, and then he knew there was no place to hide and no place to run and he waited against the wall for his life to end.

Berel Strauss saw him and came across the room, a short, fat man with bent shoulders from all the years over the sewing machine. A quiet man, a diffident, frightened man, working ten and twelve hours a day in the tailor shop on Jackson Street, whose oldest daughter was now three weeks late and whose soon to be, he thought, son-in-law stood white and still and erect against the wall of the billiard room.

He stopped before Joe and they watched each other, and the

older man's eyes were apologetic and sad and cringing. Joe hated him.

"Joe," he said, and tried to smile for the boy.

I got to get to Pa, Joe thought.

"Marion, Joe." He touched Joe's coat sleeve in a gesture of understanding and friendliness and the boy moved. "She's in the car with my missus." He nodded, bowing before the fact, as his ancestors had waited for the Romans and the Spaniards and the Russians.

"Happens, Joe," he said.

Had to come here, Joe thought. He wanted to kill the man. Couldn't wait. He hated the man. He wouldn't look at him and wouldn't talk to him, but brushed past the man and toward the door, Berel Strauss following.

Outside, Joe turned. "Where's the car?"

Berel pointed to University Avenue, to the University Press Building. "There, over there."

Walking past Jones Hall, past the arts college beyond, Joe kept his eyes to the walk, wouldn't look ahead. In his mind this could be seen on him, he wore a sign which proclaimed it, and all the students, those few friends he'd made, the instructors he knew, were all watching him, and he could think only that now nobody would call him Mr. Simon as his teachers did here.

Pa. I got to get to Pa, he thought. I'm all right if I hold out until I get to him. He despised them all now, all three of them. He'd never said more than hello to this tailor beside him. A tailor! Jesus Christ, hadn't his mother told him about tailors? The crumb, the lowest.

"This happens, Joe," Berel said. He was padding along beside his new university-boy son-in-law. "So it happens," he said.

Why didn't this crumb shut up? Why wasn't this louse struck dumb? Struck dead, right here? What is this, the end of my life? Joe thought. Write me off the books, all washed up?

Damn her, it isn't mine, he thought. It *is* mine. It's mine, all right. It wasn't my fault. It *was* my fault, he thought. Only mine, only you, Joe-boy, he told himself. You sap. You dumb, damn-fool sap. You sap, you. You dope. You've got it now, haven't you? Now you did it, didn't you? Poor Pa. Jesus, poor Pa and poor Ma. To do it to them. Now, after all these years, when they were just coming out, just pushing their heads through the door, just breathing air for the first time, Pa writing checks, Jesus, how proud he was with that checkbook.

Didn't you know she'd run to her mother? he said to himself. Didn't you *know* this would happen? Couldn't you see she was laying for you? And in his mind he noticed the pun. Wouldn't you have bet this would happen? And then they stopped before the car and he saw Marion in the back seat, and up front, wearing an absurd, cupped hat—he wanted to fill the hat and he knew what he wanted to fill it with—her lips tight, looking straight ahead, her arms crossed over the monumental breasts, sat Sadie Strauss, ready for battle.

"Go, Joe," Berel said, and opened the back door for his new son-in-law. "Get in, Joe," he said kindly.

He saw Marion move, her hands pushed under the fur collar of the coat, her face bearing too much lipstick and too much rouge and too much mascara, and he wanted to run.

She smiled sadly at him, and as he settled back after closing the door her hand stole across to his.

He loathed her.

She held his hand in hers and he could feel the tiny fingers and he could see in his head the chipped polish on the nails. He hated unkempt hands. He hated small hands, small, chubby fingers, and there, in the back seat, as Berel Strauss swung onto University Avenue driving south to St. Paul, he remembered her hands moving over him, warm and alive, and the nails touching his skin, scratching his skin, tearing him and clawing him, and then he

could not stop but remembered all of her: in this car, in the garage in this car, his head in that fur collar beside him; in the truck and on the sofa and on the floor, and now her hand moist inside his.

He'd die first.

If he could only get to Pa.

These *crumb* here with him. These *vermin*.

"All right, it happens," said Sadie Strauss, speaking to the windshield, in complete command now. She could handle customers on Jackson Street, and she could handle this snot who was too good to talk with her, who was doing you a favor if he mumbled hello, whose mother would snub her in the synagogue at High Holidays. There'd be no snubbing now, thought Sadie Strauss.

"Happens and finished," she decided. "We'll go to the Rabbi Mintz and married and finished. There is Marion's room and move in," she decided.

He'd kill them all first.

"Have a *chupe*, ceremony, takes five minutes," she said, and he heard her begin to sniffle, and beside him Marion was pushing herself over to him.

"I have to see my pa," Joe said.

"What for your pa? You don't need your pa," said Sadie Strauss. "You didn't need your pa for this other business, you don't need the pa now."

"Sadie," from her husband. "Do we need arguments for the *kinder*, children?"

"Drive!" she commanded. She didn't even look at *him*.

"I have to see my pa," Joe said. They were at Snelling Avenue now, waiting for the semaphore to change, and Joe saw the mail trucks leaving the post office branch, saw women walking to lunch, saw their legs, saw the trolley, saw the Coca-Cola truck, saw him-

self in the green uniform driving the truck; he'd be nothing but a truck driver the rest of his life.

"You don't need the pa," Sadie Strauss said. She wasn't trusting this one behind her. "We are two witnesses and finished."

"Listen, I'm seeing my pa," Joe said, and then felt Marion's arms around his, her cold hands on his neck, pulling him down to the familiar fur collar.

"Don't argue, darling," she said. "I love you," she said.

He wanted to choke her.

"Please, darling," she said. "Please. Joey. Joey darling," and she began to cry, holding him and crying, and he wanted to gag her. The bitch.

"I'm going to see my pa, Mrs. Strauss," he said. "You can just leave me on Robert and Concord and I'll go up to Pa's. I'm not going to do anything without him."

"You'll cheat us," said Sadie Strauss. She was beaten now, and she knew it somehow. She was crying and Marion was crying, and Joe saw Berel wipe his eyes and he waited now only for Robert and Concord streets.

"You'll cheat us," Sadie Strauss wailed. "We're not good enough. Not good enough for your mother. My daughter."

"Ma, please," said Marion, and leaned over to hold her mother, her thigh against Joe, the pair of women holding each other.

"My baby," Sadie wailed. "My own milk for my baby," she wailed, and Joe wanted to strangle this hag.

At the Y there on Robert Street, Marion turned to Joe and held him, put her hands to his face. "Don't be afraid, lover," she said. "Don't be afraid, darling. My darling," she said, and Joe wondered where she'd read this, what movie it had come from. "I trust you, Joe," she said. "Joey, I trust you. It's not us," she said as he reached to open the door, felt the wind on his legs. "There's someone more important now," she said, and he ran out of the car.

He watched them turn on Concord and got the taxi there before the bank.

Lev Simon was picking onions, taking them from one bushel, cutting the sprouts, dropping them into another. He saw Joe come into the store and he saw it on Joe's face, didn't know what, but saw the trouble. Lev Simon moved around the corner, standing at the end, his elbows on the upright crossbar which held the wrapping paper.

Look at him, Joe thought as he came toward his father. In the wool shirt and the sweater, wearing the apron, his hands chapped, look at him. Look at him waiting now for the greetings. Some greetings I'm bringing you, he thought as he came toward his father.

"Where's Andy?" Joe asked.

"Lunch."

Joe set the books on the counter and tried to smile for his father, and then Lev said. "What, Joe? Tell me, Joe. You failed? You failed there the university?"

"I wish it was. I'd give my arm if that's what it was."

"Accident. Accident, some kind of? Ma? The boys?"

"No. Take it easy. It's not that. It's me."

"What you, Joe? Joe!"

"Me. Me and Marion Strauss. Me and her, damn it."

Softly: "Oy!"

"They came to get me at school."

Quietly: "Oy, oy," Lev Simon seemed to groan. His hands hung over the crossbar and he dropped the paring knife, his fingers hanging limp and his eyes closed.

Joe told him.

"Oy, oy, oy, oy, oy," said Lev Simon.

"I won't marry her," Joe cried.

Lev Simon looked up. "What then, mister?"

"I don't have to marry her. I know I don't."

"Who then? Me, Joe?" Lev Simon was angry now; the fear had turned to anger. "You want maybe I should marry with this girl?"

"Damn it, I won't," Joe said. He put his hands over his father's. "She can have it fixed, Pa. I don't have to marry her, Pa. Please, Pa, I don't want to marry her and have a kid."

"Why you screw with her then?" Lev Simon asked. He looked up at his son. Now he had it all, everything there for him, and now it was time to talk.

"Let her have it fixed."

Lev Simon pointed at the door. "Go tell her."

Joe held his father's arm. "I can't, Pa. Her mother. Screaming to get married, to drive to Rabbi Mintz. I can't, Pa, I'll run away."

"Shut ap."

"I will."

"Ah—this is crazy talk. You want to marry with this girl?" And Lev Simon hated himself at that instant, for he wished his son to say no.

"Pa." Joe spoke carefully. "I don't care what happens, I'm not going to marry her."

"Nu," Lev decided. "Go tell them. Go, Joe, and findish ap before Ma knows, before they run to Ma. This is not a business for Ma."

"You, Pa." Joe was terrified. Here in this store he was safe, and if he thought of cowardice, of pride, of manliness, the fear was greater. "Pa, I won't do it. You have to go, Pa. Please, Pa. Take the truck, Pa."

Lev Simon watched his son and then he reached behind him to undo the apron. Watching his son, he took off the apron and reached for the jacket and his cap. He took a dollar out of the register and, watching his son, he lit a cigarette. "They live there on Concord Street still?" he asked, and Joe nodded.

Watching his son, his cowardly son, Lev came around the

counter. He walked to the door and then he turned, pointing at the apples.

"Dollar eighty-nine, the Jonathans, if somebody wants," he said.

Andy came back from lunch and Joe told him Lev had gone to the market. They filled shelves and they swept the store and Joe waited on customers, and at two-thirty he saw the truck stop in front of the store.

Lev Simon walked back to the cash register at the end of the counter and he unbuttoned his jacket.

His face was old; Joe saw how old his father was that day, all right, and at last Lev Simon turned to his son.

"They wait there for you," he said. "Marion with the mother. Arranged already the doctor."

Joe wanted to kiss his father.

"Take there fifty dollars from the register," his father ordered.

"I can't just take it," Joe said. "Give it to me, Pa."

"Take!" Lev Simon shouted, and Andy headed for the back room. "This take from me, I don't give." He wanted now, this instant, for the first time, to strike his son, and cursed himself because he could not.

"Take!"

Joe took four tens and two fives.

"Take five dollars for cabs, accidents maybe."

Joe took it, watching his father. He didn't have to be so mad.

"All right," Lev said. "And come home from there. And laugh tonight for Ma, you hear me, mister? This is not for Ma."

"All right."

Joe reached for his books and came around to the open side of the counter.

"Joe?"

"Yeah?"

"She. Marion."

"What?"

"Marion. She was a *maidel*, virgin?"

Joe whispered it. "Yeah."

Lev Simon waited until Joe had raised his head.

"You *schwein*," he said, and his lips smiled. "You *schwein*, you."

Hub came around from the rear of the house and pushed himself up on the fence, watching Marty and Hy with the football.

He could not get Lev Simon out of his head for a moment. He felt guilty sitting here on this fence, feeling the afternoon sun, feeling the fall wind at his throat, feeling the muscles in his legs as his feet gripped the bottom rung.

He wanted at that instant to summon doctors, to call for specialists, drive Lev Simon to Rochester, do something. Not to accept this, not to let him lie there waiting. He felt himself to be a murderer, sitting here in the sun while his father lay prisoner there in the bedroom, waiting for the guest.

He, Hub, was a guest now in his father's house, as was Joe, as was Marty, but another visitor was expected and the visitor's arrival time could not be determined, there were no timetables. Yet, even knowing, could the blinds be drawn against his coming, the doors locked, or his entrance barred?

The guest's reservations had been made, his host lay waiting in the bedroom, and Hub felt the moistness in his eyes.

On such a day! On such a sun-shining, soft-wind-blowing, leaves-brown, lovely day, Lev Simon would have been out at dawn if it were Sunday.

If it were Sunday, he'd have the car in front of the house, the automobile washed, and Lev Simon bathed, wearing the gabardine pants, the flannel shirt, the suède jacket, all the soft rich-feeling clothes that he loved; wearing Marty's baseball cap, sitting in the sun beside the car and waiting for his sons to wake.

If it were Sunday, Lev Simon would gather them all. He didn't care where they went, just so he didn't have to drive and could sit in the back seat with two of them.

If it were Sunday, they had to go somewhere. "America, kinder," he'd say. "This is *my* country, all right. By golly, *this* is a country. Come on, we drive.

"We drive. Damn me, *this* is a country."

Marty saw Hub's head lowered, saw him brushing his eyes; taking careful aim, he threw the football at Hub's chest.

Hy bent for the ball as it bounded away, and then the pair of them—Joe called them the Katzenjammers—stood before Hub, jostling him until he slid off the fence, stood on the sidewalk with them.

"Who's with Lev?" Hy asked.

"Joe."

"You guys," Hub said, shaking his head. "How can you play ball?"

Marty, gently now, to this older brother for whom he always felt protective: "What then, Hub? What do you want us to do, Hub?"

Hub nodded. "You're right. I'm sorry. I must be nuts, I guess. Go ahead, play."

"That's enough," Hy said.

"Shouldn't you guys be studying? How are you going to make up this time?" Hub asked.

"How are we going to study, Hub?" Hy asked.

"Yeah," Hub said. He thrust his hands into his pants pockets and led the way to the cement steps before the house.

Hub and Marty sat on the top step, Hy below them, and they lit cigarettes.

"You know what I can't take," Hub said. "He never had a good day. Now, now when he's got a chance to live, when he could afford to live—he never could afford it—now he has to get this."

"All right, Hub," Marty said.

"Short-changed like this."

"Hub."

"It's not right," Hub said. He spat and rubbed his foot over it into the cement. "It makes me sick."

"All right," Marty said. "We're lucky he sold the store."

"Was it enough?" Hub asked. "Why am I fooling myself? We got to talk about it. Was it enough?"

"I wrote you," Hy said. "Hub, you got it all. With that and with the building."

Suddenly, with no warning grin, Hub broke into laughter, feeling somehow that he was sinning, but unable to stop.

The boys grinned, his laughter infectious, waiting while Hub threw his head back, leaning backward, propped on his elbows.

"What, Hub?" asked Marty, grinning. "Come on, Hub, what?"

Hub leaned forward, smiling now. "I was thinking it was a good thing we owned the building, and then of how we bought it, Ma and all, and I couldn't help it, couldn't stop."

Marty nodded, grinning, laughed, checked himself. "That was a day."

"A day and a night," Hy said.

"You missed it," Hub said to him. "Marty and me, we got it, all right. Right from the start," he said, chuckling

"That Ma," Marty said.

"She came through that day, didn't she?" Hy said. "That was her day, all right."

"Yeah, but you should have been there with Marty and me," Hub said. "At the store, when that guy showed up. . . ."

This was early spring, perhaps six weeks after Joe's paternity had been canceled.

Among them the boys had established an unwritten contract, so that daily, from one o'clock on, at least one of the sons was in the store. They wanted Lev Simon out of there for some of the afternoon. They wanted him on the town, or home sleeping, or in the market sitting with cronies.

"He don't even crap regular," Joe had said one night, the four of them assembled in his bedroom, and that settled it.

Sarah Simon signed excuses for the three younger boys to be let out of school after twelve-thirty, and Lev Simon had his hours off.

On this day Marty and Hub had both taken the trolley to the store, and Lev Simon, tired, unshaven, feeling a cold in his chest, hungry, and sleepy, had agreed to go home at three o'clock.

Hub was out front, standing on a stepladder, painting signs on the windows, when he saw the car stop. He stood on the ladder watching Sidney Saperstein open the back door of the car, reach in, and come out with the sign.

He knew Sidney, Marty knew him. The boy was at the university with Joe and his father was Lev Simon's landlord.

Hub knew that something was not right, for Sidney kept his face averted, pulling this thing out of the car, and leaning over on the ladder, Hub saw it was a white canvas sign stretched over a wooden frame with huge letters.

Hub read: FOR SALE

He read: FOR SALE, and making a fist, began to pound the window.

He pounded the window, watching Sidney carry the sign and

prop it up against the bricks of the store below the other window. The FOR SALE faced the street, and Hub turned and pounded on the window.

"Hey, Sidney," he said. "Where's the sign going?"

"You know where," Sidney said.

"You're nuts." He pounded on the window. "You're nuts," he repeated. "Sell the building and they goose my old man out of here. You know that."

"Listen, my old man told me hang a sign. I'm hanging a sign," said Sidney, who was taller than Hub and fat, and had big fat hands.

"You can't hang that sign," Hub said, standing on the ladder.

Sidney turned, reached into the car for a hammer and nails, dropped the nails into his coat pocket.

"My old man said hang a sign," Sidney said, and then Marty came through the door, out onto the sidewalk, looking at Sidney, at Hub, and then at the sign.

He pointed at the sign. "What's that?" he asked.

"What's that?" Sidney said. "It's a sign, what the hell do you think it is?"

"What the hell do you think *you're* going to do?" Hub saw the red flush coming up Marty's neck.

"I'm going to hang it, wise guy," Sidney said, pushing the hammer into his pocket.

"You know where," Marty said. "Get out of here with that sign," he said, "before people see it."

"Listen——"

"Listen," Marty said. "You listen, stupid. Sell the building and the guy buys it throws us out of here. If my pa can make a buck here, then somebody else can."

He jerked his thumb. "Beat it."

"Listen——" Sidney pushed up against Marty, pushing his stomach against the smaller youth.

Marty put the flat of his hand against Sidney's chest and shoved him back. "Sidney, beat it."

"I'm hanging the sign," Sidney said.

Marty turned and put the heel of his shoe through the canvas, and now only SALE showed, the FOR was torn away. "What sign?" he asked, his fists pushing in against his hips.

"Hey," Sidney said.

Marty put his foot through the SALE. He jumped up and came down with both feet, the frame cracking.

Sidney reached for the hammer and Hub leaned over, turning the cup in his hand so that the white, pasty chalk came down over Sidney's hat. Marty turned Sidney, his arms about the fat boy's waist, his knee up against the other's behind, and pushed and booted him toward the car. He held the fat boy with one arm, opened the door of the car, and pushed him into it.

Sidney turned and saw Marty and Hub standing before him. Marty leveled his forefinger at the fat boy. "While you're whole," he said. "Go ahead, Sid, while I feel good. I'll kill you if you show up around here."

They broke the sign to bits and carried it into the basement, throwing it into the furnace.

Riding home on the trolley, Hub said: "He can put one up tonight, you know that?"

"Certainly I know it," Marty said. "I just couldn't let him hang it, that's all." He leaned over and smacked the top of the seat in front of them with his fist.

"What's the matter with that Pa? Why won't he buy the building? Two tenants upstairs, what's the matter with him?"

"You know him, stubborn."

"Stubborn." Marty turned in the seat. "Saperstein'll sell the building. He offered it to Pa. He'll sell it; he wants to get out of it. What's the *matter* with him?"

Hub turned to the window. "Wait'll we get home," he said. "What's the use of talking now?"

Maybe it helps if you get the kitchen table straight. Hub sat at one end; Joe faced him. Going clockwise from Hub, there was Sarah Simon, Marty beside her, then Joe, of course. Lev Simon at Joe's left, and beside the old boy, Hy.

Thus they sat before beginning dinner, when Hub told them of the sign.

The color went out of Lev Simon's face. Sarah dropped a spoon on the floor, let it lie. Hy was silent, and Joe watched his father, saw the hands working under the table, saw the Adam's apple moving, saw the fear.

When Hub finished, Joe said: "They'll come out with another sign. He can hang a sign tonight. He'll come out with cops. For Pete's sake, it's his building."

"I'll call," Lev Simon said. "He's honest man, this Saperstein."

"What's honesty got to do with it?" Joe asked.

"It's his building, Pa," Hub said.

"You can't——" Marty began.

"All right, enough," Lev Simon said. "Don't need arguments with you. What are you, my Supreme Court?"

Joe watched Sarah Simon sitting quietly, one elbow on the table, her head propped against her hand, and the fingers of the other hand busy with the crumbs on the tablecloth.

"What are you?" Hub asked his father. "What are you, blind?"

"This voice is not for me," Lev warned. "Listen, mister, be careful with this voice, please."

Only when he's wrong, Joe thought. Would he talk like that when he wasn't wrong?

"You've got to buy it, Pa," Marty said reasonably.

"What's so wrong with buying it, Pa?" Hub asked. "You'll cut your rent in half. With the dough from the two apartments, you cut your rent in *half*," he said.

"'Nough," Lev said. He half rose in his chair. "Find me, please, Saperstein's number," he said to Joe.

Joe sat still while Marty asked: "Why don't you buy the building? That's what I want to know. He told you all he wants is five hundred dollars deposit. Why don't you buy the goddamn building?" he asked.

Lev Simon watched them all. "Because I'm not citizen," he said. "Do you have to ask? You know I'm not citizen."

"That's no reason," Marty said, and he was right, but his father was also right. "No citizen, what do you think, they'll deport you? What are you doing in buying a building, breaking the law?"

"Another thing"—Marty leaned over the table, pointing the forefinger at his father—"why *aren't* you a citizen? You're always singing 'Yankee Doodle Dandy,' waving the flag, then why aren't you? Why are you too good to go down and take first papers? Do you have to be like the rest of these crummy aliens around here, come to this country and live like human beings, live like no king ever lived over there, and not even decent enough to bother with doing your duty?"

"It's your duty. You've got no excuse. I know"—he waved his hand—"I shouldn't talk to you like that, and I'm sorry. Pa, I swear I'm sorry," he said emotionally, "but it burns me up. You yourself said, right here in this spot—if I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times: 'This best goddamn country in the whole goddamn world,' " Marty said, aping his father.

Lev Simon had told Joe. He could trust Joe and he had to tell Joe; that much of his fear he had to share. But the others, the three native-born citizens of the realm, whom he fed and clothed and nursed and loved, the trio around him, the candidates for the presidency, these three knew only that he hadn't had the time.

"You findish?" Lev Simon asked.

"Yes, I'm finished," Marty said, and got out of his chair, rushed out of the kitchen, found his jacket in the living room,

and was out of the house before he could say more. He would be sorry enough for what he had said, seeing Lev Simon's hurt, tired face before his eyes all the rest of the night, coming into the house later, as he had before, to take off his shoes and tiptoe into his father's bedroom, kneel before the bed, knowing his father was awake, and say he was sorry and wait for the hand on his hair and the fingers at his neck and the forgiving, because he could not sleep without it.

"We're having some supper," Hub said.

"Joe, get me, please, Saperstein there."

"You won't buy it, will you?" Hub said, making a statement of fact.

"Joe," Lev Simon said.

Sarah Simon had piled the crumbs into a neat mound and now she had her elbows together, her hands folded, her chin resting on her knuckles, and she said:

"I'll buy. Joe, call Saperstein. Tell him we come to buy."

"Sarah, please." Lev Simon was annoyed now. "Sit still, Joe."

"So I'll call," she said. "Lev, tonight the building is bought."

"Sarah, please."

She was red with excitement, having sat and listened to all of it, knowing what she must do. "I'll buy, Lev, if you are afraid."

"And money?" he said.

She nodded. "Money. I have the money. In the closet. Five hundred dollars."

"Not your money," he said, and their three sons watched him as though he had confessed infidelity.

"Not mine?" she asked. "Yours," she said.

He was silent.

"Only yours, Lev," she said. "You worked and not me. Hy, go to the closet and bring the money."

Hy went and returned with the old battered white leather purse with the heavy rubber binder around it.

She took the money out and set it there on the table amid the food and she said: "Nu, Lev? How much is my work and how much is your work?"

"Sarah, please."

"Tell me." She held the purse in both hands, her eyes bright, feeling her heartbeats, feeling her throat dry, feeling the trembling, for she had been raised in a house and at a time when women sat in kitchens and with other women.

"Tell me," said Sarah Simon, who had borne him six sons, two stillborn, who had followed him over ten borders, who had smiled for him always, and held him in the night, and never admitted nor shown terror, and never kept him waiting for a meal, nor wanting for a shirt.

"Give me my money for diapers," she said, "and give me my money for Hy."

"The *kinder*," he said, "not nice for the *kinder*."

"No secrets." She shook her head. "We made up to start with no secrets and we finish with no secrets. Give me for Hy, Lev, and for Marty. Give me for Hub, for Joe, for each Monday clothes to wash and for each Tuesday shirts for five men."

"Sarah, I don't buy buildings."

She set the purse on the table and she looked at him, waiting until she found his eyes. She held his eyes then and she said:

"Tonight we buy, Lev. Hear me good, Lev, listen to me," she said. "Tonight we buy or tomorrow I go to the Rabbi Mintz and *gett*, divorce."

"Sarah!"

She reached over and she touched Hub and held his arm. She reached over and held Joe's arm and she said:

"By my sons, Lev. Hear me, Lev, I swear by my sons and I swear by my God. Buy tonight, or a *gett*!"

Lev rose and left the kitchen, and when he had gone Sarah Simon put her face in her hands and then she wept. She wept

quietly and softly and she cried for her husband and for her children, her shoulders moving, feeling her sons' arms about her, and then Lev Simon came into the kitchen, standing before the icebox to knot his tie. He knotted his tie and reached over, put the money in his pocket.

"This is the way you go?" he asked. "With a red nose and this dress to buy a building?" he asked.

She watched him.

"No supper," he complained.

She watched him.

"Wear the good coat," he said. "Cost plenty, the good coat. Let Saperstein's wife see a *beautiful* woman, how she looks."

To Joe: "Hurry ap dress, mister. You come and you show where to sign for this special building have to buy tonight."

They bought it in an hour. They left a binder and arranged to meet tomorrow to sign contracts and then, driving down Grand Avenue, up on the Hill, leaving Saperstein's fine house, Lev said: "By golly, I'm sure hungry."

They were in the truck, Sarah Simon between Lev and Joe, the written agreement safe in her muff, and she said: "Take me for supper, Lev."

"To a restaurant?" he said.

"Take me, Lev."

"Now?"

She moved up against him in the darkness of the truck cab; she moved her thigh against him and her hand crept across his trousers and held him finally.

She held him and he began to grin in the darkness of the cab and she leaned up until her lips were at his ear and her tongue at his ear.

"First to a restaurant," she whispered in Russian, so Joe would not understand.

They were almost ready to leave that October Saturday evening, the city dark at seven o'clock, when the telephone rang in the store.

Hy had talked with Sarah, taken her Sunday order, told her to turn the thermostat for the hot water, and was standing now in the cashier's cage which Hub had built, when it rang again.

Marty was wearing his jacket, sitting on the counter as though a whistle had blown at seven and he had punched his time card. Joe stood with his father up front, and Hub was still trying to find an error in Marty's C.O.D. schedule for the day, when Hy said:

"I'm fine, Auntie." He laughed. "Yes, we sure do, dear, all of us. Well, we don't think it's work," grinning as he spoke, warm and smiling, as he would have been talking to an unknown solicitor, to the telephone operator, to Gerald L. K. Smith.

"Yes, dear, sure. I'll get him. Just a minute, Auntie," and put his hand over the mouthpiece, pushed the telephone down out of sight.

Hub looked up from his C.O.D. cards, his lips set. Marty came off the counter slowly, took two steps to the center of the store, standing over the grate, his head moving from Hy to Lev Simon, who stood with Joe.

"Pa," Hy hissed. "Hey, Pa." His face contorted in exasperation as he tried to catch his father's attention without his aunt's hearing him.

"Pa," he hissed, and at last Joe turned, saw his brother gesturing, and Marty, trying to keep his hands still, trying to hold onto himself, having promised his father he would try, at least try, at last punched his hand with his fist, couldn't stand it.

"PA!" he shouted, and Lev Simon turned. "Your deadbeat sister-in-law," he said, jerking his thumb. "Your deadbeat brother-in-law is broke again," he said, and Hy writhed as he thought Ruth Baratz might have heard, pressing down on the mouthpiece, gritting his teeth, hopping from one leg to the other.

"Go ahead," Marty said, talking now, actually for all four, "maybe she just wants your eyes," he said. "Maybe she'll let you off easy, only two hundred dollars, or maybe she wants the whole store, just sign the store over to that deadbeat."

Lev Simon came away from the window, Joe following, looking at Marty as he walked toward the cashier's booth, having removed the apron, his shirt falling out of his trousers, one tail hanging over his fly, and the belt hidden completely by the blue cloth.

Hub joined Marty over the grate, watching Lev Simon. "Pa," Hub said, "say no."

"Pa," Marty said. "Please, Pa, say no."

Joe disturbed a mound of oranges, breaking down a perfect pyramid to rearrange them, reading the labels wrapped around each fruit, watching the oranges carefully, counting them, losing the count in the mound, and starting again, over and over.

Marty darted forward, his arm out, and he caught Lev Simon's sweater, holding his father, putting his arms about the older man, his face soft now, his eyes soft. He held his father to him, and Lev Simon could not have broken free if he'd wanted.

"Please, Pa," Marty said, and Lev could smell the soap his son used, could smell the cleanliness of his redheaded, lithe son, could feel the boy tremble as the youngster tried to hold onto himself. "Pa, you don't have to give them anything. Pa, you can't

go on giving them things," said Marty, shaking his head as he spoke. "You don't have to, Pa, you can say no; let me do it.

"I'll do it, Pa, let me. We know you're a soft touch, let me." He nodded. "Want me to?" he asked. "I will. Let me, Pa."

"Loose me, Mart," Lev Simon said. "Loose, please."

Marty watched him for an instant, then pulled his arms free, stepped back, and jumped to the cashier's booth. He wrenched the phone out of Hy's hand, held it, glaring at his father, daring his father, but Lev Simon walked toward him silently, watching his son, his hand out for the telephone. He would not take it from Marty's hand but waited for the telephone, and the boy watched him and at last gave it to him, coming out from the cashier's booth behind his father.

Hy was busy with his mother's order for the week end, Joe still with the oranges, sick with the knowledge of the merchandise which would be carted out of the store soon, wanting no part of the argument now.

Hub said: "Why does he keep giving that deadbeat stuff?" The adding machine was busy in Hub's head, oiled and loose, ready to operate. He spoke softly, held quiet by some unconscious respect for his father.

"That deadbeat," Hub said, and came around the counter, reaching below, coming up with a ledger. "Mart," he said, and as his brother approached, opened the ledger, pointed to a column of figures.

"Over four hundred bucks," Hub said, and Marty turned to look at his father, who wrote steadily now on the back of a paper bag.

Hub closed the ledger, threw it underneath the counter. "It gets me sick. I swear to God, I get sick. Four hundred here," he said. "How much that we don't know about? How many times does she call him when we're not here? How many Sundays has he sneaked out to feed that worthless bum?"

Hy found an order box, pushed it open, and, filling it, carried it out to the truck. When he came back into the store Lev Simon said: "Say, Hy, you help me, yes?"

"Sure, Pa."

Lev Simon came out of the booth to stand on the grate. He had given Hy the paper bag on which he'd written Ruth's order and stood now with his hands behind him.

"Nothing to eat there in his house," Lev said of Ben Baratz.

Nobody spoke.

"Went to North Dakota, don't leave her a *penny*," Lev Simon said.

Nobody spoke.

"That bum," Lev said, trying to enlist his sons' sympathy for him, Lev; trying to demonstrate his dislike for Ben Baratz.

"Leave a womans like this. Starving," Lev said.

"Why not?" Hub asked. "He's got a good sucker. He can always tell his wife to call St. Paul's leading sucker. Any time at all, just so the phone works, call Lev Simon, the sucker."

"Thanks for compliment," Lev said.

"What do you want me to say?" Hub asked. "I can come here on Saturday, and Mart and Joe. Hy should be out playing ball, all of us here trying to save a few dollars. That's all right, isn't it?"

"Don't ask you to come."

"Stop with that stuff," Marty said. "You don't *have* to ask us. You know we'll be here."

"Look at him," Hub said, pointing to Joe. "What kind of a life is that, going to college for two years and never even see Minnesota play football? Do you know that?" Hub had lost his fear; there was no respect now. Lev Simon had wanted frankness and honesty from his sons, no secrets with his sons, and he was getting it now.

"Hub, shut up," Joe said.

"Show me one guy who wasn't at the game today," Hub challenged. "Show me one student besides Joe. Because why? Because Joe won't say anything. You don't know that," he accused his father. "You don't know that he's here so you won't have to give somebody three bucks to work the day through."

Lev nodded, trying to convince his sons. "I know. Honest, boys, I know. I 'preciate."

"It's nothing with appreciate," Marty said. "Don't come at me with that routine. Nobody's asking for appreciation in this store; this isn't an appreciation family. Don't be so humble."

"Don't be so stubborn!" he shouted.

"Tell me why," Hub pleaded. He held the ledger open in his hands now as though it were a prayer book, shoving it forward at his father, holding it over the counter. "Tell me why you have to support this man. Give him coal."

Marty whirled. "What?"

Hub nodded. "Yes, coal. Yes, you're darned right. Coal. I saw him dragging a sack of coal out of the basement here one day for her." He stared defiantly at his father. "Go ahead, deny it."

Lev Simon grimaced and gestured with his hands, as though all of this were distasteful. "Hey, Hy," he shouted into the back room. "Here, I help you," he said.

"We're burning the gas at home for nothing," Hub said, remembering the lighted boiler which Sarah had attended to.

Hy came out tugging at a forty-nine-pound sack of flour, and Lev went forward to help him.

Up front a man pounded on the locked door and Marty ran forward, standing before the door, staring at the man. Marty said: "We're closed."

The man rattled the handle and Marty turned the key, opened the door an inch. "We're closed," he said, turning away the buyer. "Beat it," he said, and locked the door. When he turned, his father was watching him.

"Who are you?" his father asked. "Are you boss here?"

"Better than letting him come in and charge stuff. We're charging enough stuff here tonight," Marty said, pointing at the floor.

"I think you keep still," Lev said. "I think I don't need you here in my store, mister," he said to Marty.

"Yes, you said it," Marty answered.

"I think you sit and shut up now, mister."

"Yes. I'll shut up. Yes, you bet I'll shut up." Marty darted to the counter, pulled the ledger from Hub's hands, whirled, and ran to Joe at the orange rack, pushing the ledger at him.

"Here," he said. "Look at it," he said. "instead of standing there playing with oranges. You're the oldest, why don't you do something?" Beside himself now, unable to get at Ben Baratz, unable to get inside of his father's stubbornness, unable to stop the dole. "Why the hell don't you stop him?" Marty asked. "He'll listen to you."

"Hy," Hub said. "Call Ma. Tell her to turn off the gas."

"Shut up, Mart," Joe said. He had his back to the oranges. "Shut up."

Marty flung the ledger on the floor. "If you were anything," he shouted, "if you had any feeling for this place, for Pa, you'd stop him. You're the oldest, stop him."

Joe bent to pick up the ledger. "Mart, that's enough," he said. "You and your big mouth. Shut it up," he said, watching the fists of the other. "You hear me? Shut up."

"You yellow rat," Marty said, and then as Lev Simon started forward, Joe slapped his brother full across the face, felt his fingernail tearing skin. He wanted his arm cut off, looking at Marty, Lev coming toward them, but the boy ran for the door, unlocked it, thrust it open, and ran out into the darkness.

Lev Simon followed Marty outside, shouting for the boy, asking him to stop, begging him to come back, commanding him to

return, but the youth had disappeared, and when Lev returned, Hub and Hy were wearing their jackets.

"Just remember one thing," Hub said, and Lev Simon thought he could not bear any more, could not listen. "Just remember. We got a car out there, finally made it to a car, a stinking, two-hundred-dollar car." He spoke of the four-year-old sedan Lev had bought. "We pay bills and we drive a car that needs brakes and points and a ring job," said Hub, the engineer. "But Baratz drives a new one, every year a new one, and *his* daughter is at the game—she was there today—just remember that."

"Go, Hub," Lev said, and there was no strength in his voice, no gas. "Take Hy and the car and go home and use the hot water so you wouldn't worry about the gas."

"I'm going," Hub said. "I'm sick of this place," he said. "Sick of it."

"Find maybe Marty there somewhere," Lev Simon said. He was beyond hearing their words now.

"Come on, Hy," Hub said, and the pair left.

Joe went into the back room and got his jacket and his father's jacket. Joe dropped his on the counter and held Lev's open for the older man to push his arms through the sleeves.

"I'll get the stuff out into the truck," Joe said. He reached for the boxful of groceries, lifted it, wanted to set the sack of flour on top, but Lev Simon picked it up.

They went out to the truck silently and returned. Joe began to pull light cords, and then Lev Simon said: "I be a minute."

"Where you going?"

"In the basement there. A minute, Joe."

"We've got the stove fixed," Joe said.

Lev Simon looked at him.

"I'll get it," Joe said. "What do you want, a sack of coal?"

Lev Simon nodded.

"How can he do it?" Joe asked. "How can a man go away and leave his wife without heat?"

"She says coal comes tonight sometimes. You know, they don't pay, so coal company say you wait. Deliver first the cash customers."

When Joe came up from the basement, the sack of coal on his shoulder, only the light in the window remained burning. Lev held the door open for his son, then leaned over to pull the cord. He locked the door, standing outside for an instant, testing the handle, and at last, satisfied it was bolted, got into the truck.

Joe pulled away from the curb. Lev sat, legs crossed, on the seat, turned toward Joe, his fingers at Joe's neck.

"You want to light me a cigarette?" Joe asked.

Lev lit two and handed one to Joe.

"Some party tonight," Joe said.

"Pretty special," Lev agreed.

"I hope Marty's home. I shouldn't have slapped him. I wanted to drop dead when I hit him. My own brother."

"Yeah."

"They shouldn't talk to you like that," Joe said. "They got no right."

"Nu?"

"They got no right," Joe said.

"So . . . Say, Joe, you want to see football games?"

"Ah . . ."

"Don't realize 'bout these football games."

"Cut it out, Pa. What do I care about a football game?" He did care.

"Still . . ." Lev said.

"Listen, it's not important," Joe said, but Lev could see it on him now.

"Yes, important," Lev said. "When you young, kid, is everything important."

"Will you forget it?"

"You go next Saturday to this football game."

"Forget it!"

"Can't. Can't forget. Can't forget Marty runs from me and Hub is mad with me and you don't see football games with me. Listen, Joe, can't forget nothing from you kids. Whatever is not right with my kids I don't forget. Someday you be a father, Joe, you understand this.

"You understand me, Joe, football is like a knife now. You understand, Marty runs, this is a knife. Here, Joe"—he was facing his son now as the younger man drove, waving the forefinger—"I got four sons, my pa have ten. Ten sons, three daughters. I have a brother, Max, he's older than me maybe two years, and in '09 there in Russia he has to go for military service. You remember I told you, by the Czar everybody goes."

"Sure."

"I'm in Odessa then working, you remember I told you, and this day I am home cause tomorrow Max goes to Czar's army. My father has ten sons, Joe, and this is the fourth. The other three, he pays to get them out of army. Two he pays *chabar*, you know what's *chabar*?"

"Bribe."

"Yeah, bribe. Two he pays and the third he sends to Australia, and now no money for Max. No war, you understand me, Joe, but Max must go be a soldier, three years a privates—Jew can only be a privates, lest he's doctor, and Max is no doctor.

"I'm home this night and time for Max to go to Balta; that's first big town sixty miles from our *dorf* where they have troops. Everybody kiss Max and then my father takes him to Balta.

"Listen to me, Joe, I don't sleep *this* night, and maybe nine o'clock next morning my father is back and I'm waiting for him by the railroad.

"Listen to me, Joe, I take him from the train—my father is not fifty then—and I help him to the carriage and I drive him home.

"And he's gray."

"What?" Joe asked.

Lev Simon nodded as they swung onto Central Avenue. "Honest an' true, my father is gray."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this one night, he gives his son to the army and he's gray."

"All gray?"

"Plenty gray. He never have a gray hair till this night, and one son to the army and white hair."

"Jesus!"

"Yeah, Jesus," Lev Simon said. "And he have *ten* sons, Joe."

They were silent for about a mile and then Joe said: "How long you going to keep this up with groceries and with coal?"

"What shall I do with her, Joe?"

"With him, you mean."

"What shall I do, Joe?"

"Say no. Say no once."

"Next time."

"Pa, you lie," Joe said considerately. "You're afraid of him."

"You crazy."

"Pa, I don't know much. I'm not a smart guy, and I don't think too good. But one thing I know, Pa: I know you. I know you good, *boychik*," Joe said to his father, "and I know you're stubborn, but you're not that stubborn to stay up against all of us. You're afraid of him and I know why you're afraid of him."

"Shut up, Joe, please."

"Because he knows how you got into the country, that's all. Because he knows you and Ma and me, how we got in. What's the matter with you? How can you believe this? You! How can you let this hang on you? And Baratz, your own flesh and blood. What do you think, how do you think, that you figure Baratz would even dream of doing this?"

"You lie, Joe."

Joe nodded. "Maybe. Maybe and maybe not. Maybe you *believe* I'm lying and maybe you won't admit what I say is so, but you're afraid of him, and don't tell me different."

"Ruth's alone there. Nothing to eat there."

"Ah . . ." Joe gave up then.

Lev Simon stayed in the truck before Ben Baratz's house. Joe asked him to stay, didn't want to spend time in his uncle's home, and with Lev inside, they'd have to sit. He made three trips, up the stairs and around to the back, and at last threw the empty order box into the truck and drove off.

"Your sweet brother-in-law is home," he said to Lev Simon.

"You crazy. Ruth told me——"

"Well, they didn't tell you about cigar smoke. I smelled it as soon as I walked in."

"Cigar smoke," Lev scoffed. "From this morning, burns from this morning."

"Yeah," Joe said. "And the car burns from this morning, doesn't it? Tell me that. I went around to the garage and his car is there. Now tell me that burns from this morning."

The boys were on the steps, sitting in a row, Hy between Hub and Marty, when they saw the two elderly men coming down Ashland Avenue, the prayer shawls in bright velvet bags under their arms, the black coats buttoned to their throats the scarves around their necks despite the September sun.

"Look at them," Marty said.

Hub glanced at his wrist watch. "What time do they *daven*, pray?" he asked. "It's early."

"It's four-thirty, Hub," Hy said. "The sun will be down in about an hour."

Marty juggled the football, staring at the two who, as they approached the house, looked unashamedly at the trio, watching them with the frank and vulgar curiosity which the third son could never tolerate.

"Honest to Pete," he said. "If it wasn't for Pa, I'd stand right up and open my fly at them. Look at them staring."

"They are rude," Hub agreed.

"Well," Hy said, "they don't know any better." The pair had passed the house now, walking slowly, each step supposedly an effort.

"Yeah, what do you know?" Marty asked. "Soft soap," he said. He clutched Hub's arm. "Listen, Hub, you see that one on the left there, the shorter one? He was around the day before yesterday, the afternoon I got home. Handouts, that's all. Right in through the front door, and hits Ma up for a buck."

"A buck!" Hub stared at the man's back.

"A buck. I wanted to give him a quarter, but not him; he wanted Ma, and she gave him the buck."

"What for?" Hub asked. "What for? Why doesn't he work?"

Marty snorted. "Work. Are you nuts? With a racket like that? He's got that beard and those soft, white hands. He never worked a day in his life. Why should he work? Say there are twenty thousand Jews in St. Paul. Say there are three thousand families. These two can make the rounds and they won't touch the same house more than once a year."

"A buck," Hub said.

"They're religious," Marty said. "They figure they're still in Russia. Only there they got potato soup. Now they've wised up, American production, they learned it all right."

"Makes me sick," Hub said. "You know what they'd get from me."

"I know what the Messiah Himself would get from you." Marty grinned.

"Pa hates those guys," Hy said.

"Good racket for Ben Baratz," Marty said. "He ought to get into this racket."

Hub smiled. "Pa *does* hate them. He hates any kind of a chippy." He began to laugh. "You should have seen him once on State Street when we lived there," he said, laughing.

"Look at him," Hy said, smiling. "He remembers everything that ever happened to him."

"I remember this, all right," Hub said. "I'll never forget it. I don't know where you were that day, Mart, but me and Joe. Well, Joe was with Pa and I was out in the yard, you remember, behind that back porch we had, building a scooter."

Hy was entranced. "Yeah? Yeah, Hub?"

"Well . . . I don't remember the time. I remember it was a Friday afternoon. I remember that, and I was on the porch. You know that old kitchen table Ma kept out there? I was cutting wood on that when this guy came to the back door."

"A polite one," Marty said.

"Yeah. Anyway, he knocked on the door and I let him in. He asked me in Yiddish, wanted my ma, he said.

"He was dressed like those two just passed, black coat, black hat—you know how they wear it, round all the way, no dent in the crown. I remember he wore high-top shoes, black felt on the outside. He wanted Ma. . . ."

Sarah Simon came to the door, wiping her hands on the apron, her face flushed from the oven. She had cleaned the house completely that day; she had gefüllte fish and chicken and soup and *matzoh* balls and carrot pudding and a cake going in and on the the stove. She'd baked bread and she'd set the table in the dining

room and she'd made a fresh batch of beet horse-radish that day. She was busy, but she flushed before the *frumer*, pious, Jew at her door, recognizing him for one of the special ones, the Talmudic students.

She asked him to come in and went for her purse without being asked, came back, and extended a quarter, for Lev Simon had a horse and wagon then and worked only between May and October and wouldn't use the quarter for tailor-made cigarettes, but the pious Jew shook his head sadly and called her sister.

He smiled sadly, holding one white hand in the other before him, and he said: "No, sister, please. I can't, sister," and she, without argument, wanting to atone somehow for this error, found another quarter, and asked the pious Jew to please accept the half dollar.

He was a kindly man, the pious Jew, and accepted, putting it in his pocket, careful not to exhibit his coin purse, for which Lev Simon would have been happy to exchange his.

The pious Jew's nostrils quivered. Hub saw that; he had his face to the kitchen window, standing there on the porch, and he saw the man raise his head as he looked to the stove.

Sarah Simon saw him watching the stove, and she smiled and pulled out a chair from the kitchen table. She asked him to sit down while she served him, but he smiled sadly again and said no.

He was very pious, he said, and here in America . . . you understand . . . the women were not so careful in America . . . kosher . . . they were not so kosher, he said to Sarah Simon, who had dishes for meat meals, and cutlery, and a complete set for dairy, and who would not admit Jell-O into her house lest it be *traif*, not kosher.

If she would serve him on the porch, the pious Jew suggested, just spread something over the table, and Sarah Simon chased Hub and his scooter. She covered the table with her best

linen, the one she had carried from the *dorf*, the one she used only on the High Holidays.

She bit her lips as she served the pious Jew who would not eat in her house, would not eat in her dirty kitchen, and then, at last, when all the food was before him, ran back into the house, into her bedroom, wept there, sprawled on the bed, where Lev Simon found her.

Hub had seen him coming into the yard, had run to tell him Sarah Simon was crying inside. Lev had not even unshackled the horse, had leaped from the wagon, dirty and sweaty, a finger wrapped in a soiled piece of paper, the blood having seeped through and congealed against the newsprint.

He saw the man eating on the porch but didn't stop. He sat on the bed and took her in his arms.

"Sarah, please," he said. "What is it, Sarah? What, *tairs*? What?"

She told him, holding him to her so that he could not chase the man from the porch. She told him and begged him not to disturb the pious Jew, feeling this a terrible sin. She begged him not to chase the man on the porch, and at last Lev promised.

He made her go to the bathroom and bathe her eyes and he, still unwashed, the cut finger burning, went out on the porch.

The man nodded, sitting there with his hat on his head, holding a quarter of chicken in his hands.

"Brother," he said.

"Brother," Lev Simon said, standing over the man. He smiled at his new brother. "My wife's kitchen is not kosher?" he asked in Yiddish, smiling at the man.

The man raised his elbows in a hopeless gesture. "America," he said.

"Not kosher, my wife's kitchen," said Lev Simon, smiling and furious with the man.

The pious Jew gave him the sad smile.

Lev Simon wanted to strike the man.

But he nodded at him and walked out into the yard. "Stable the horse, Joe," he said, and walked out of the yard.

He walked toward Congress Street, to the store on the corner, his shirt out as always, the finger aching.

In the store he bought six slices of cold ham. He bought a quart of milk.

He carried them back to the house with him, holding them away from the side of the house so Sarah would not see.

The pious Jew was still busy with the chicken when Lev Simon came onto the porch. He walked up behind the black coat, hooked his foot around the leg of a backless chair in the corner, and drew it up to the table.

He asked the Jew if he might share the table with this pious man and the other nodded, smiling graciously.

Lev smiled. He took the quart of milk out of the bag and set it next to the student, the bottle touching the chicken plate; milk and meat, the unforgivable.

He took out the red-paper-wrapped package of meat, spreading it open before the man, showing him the slices of ham.

Lev didn't look at him. He picked up a slice of meat with his dirty hand and stuffed it into his mouth. Then, the grease still on his fingers, reached over the other's arms for the bread, tearing off a piece, the grease on the bread.

Now he watched the pious Jew who had insulted his wife. He watched him while he put a slice of ham over the bread. He set this down near the plate, opened the quart of milk so that it spilled over onto the plate and onto the chicken, and then he took a swig of the milk.

The dietary laws prohibit milk with meat, but Lev Simon compounded this horrible sin, drinking milk with the pig.

The pious Jew's eyes were wide now. They were wide and horrified, and the man pushed back from the table. He seemed

to have been defiled; his face was colorless. Lev Simon sat, one leg over the other, holding the ham and bread in one hand and the milk in the other, and then taking an enormous bite. He got up and backed away from Lev Simon, moving blindly, his arms outstretched, and Lev hoped he would not be sick on the clean porch his wife had scrubbed two hours ago.

He moved backward, his arms out, unable to take his eyes from the infidel, and then at last his fingers touched the screen door behind him. He pushed at the door, took one last look at Lev Simon, and then stumbled, recovered, stumbled again, Lev hoping he would fall, but recovered and fled.

As Hub finished the story the three became almost hysterical with laughter. They were bent over on the steps, their arms on their knees, their heads low. Hub fell back on the cement stoop and then Hy rolled over on his stomach beside him, laughing, and Marty rose, laughed even more, held his stomach, his eyes watering, and subsided on the steps once more.

"What is it? What's with you guys?" Joe asked. He was in the doorway watching them, and he came out onto the stoop, stepping carefully over Hub and Hy, who lay sprawled as they laughed.

Hub raised his head. "Remember that fellow and the time Pa ate the ham on State Street?" he asked, and wiped his eyes with his fingers.

Joe smiled, nodding at them. He waited until they were still at last and then he said: "He was never much with formal religion."

Hub, serious again: "He was a religious man."

"Yes," Joe said. "He was."

"Was," Hub said.

Marty slapped his thigh. "This is what makes you crazy. Calling him was now. Was."

"He believes in God," Hy said. "I know he believes in God."

"I don't know," Joe said. "He has it figured that whatever is going to happen will happen."

"That's destiny," Hub said.

"Call it fate. The old man was—is—a fatalist. This much good"—he held one hand cupped as though testing the weight of an object—"this much bad"—he held the other hand cupped.

"He told *me* that once," Marty said. "Whatever good you get, you pay for with that much bad. Pound for pound, he said, and year for year."

"When did he *ever* have it good?" Hy asked.

"He's paying," Joe said.

"Too much," Hub said. "He's overpaying. They're holding him up."

Here is my world, he thought. This is mine, thought Lev Simon, watching them all around the bed: the boys and Sarah Simon, for whom Hy had brought the gold-colored throne in from the living room.

This is my life, he thought, and held himself together. This much I did, he thought, and wanted to hold onto them, wanted now, this instant, to sit somewhere in a restaurant with Joe, to be at the fights with Joe. He wanted to be in a boat with Marty and Hy, knowing they would douse him with handfuls of water, waiting to be drenched, looking for it. He wanted to hold Hub's son; he had never seen his grandchild and he was filled now with

such unbearable longing for all of them that he wanted to cry out, to ask for help, to summon help somewhere so that he might continue the voyage with his wife and with his sons.

By golly, but I have good-looking kids, handsome sons, he thought. Maybe every father thought so. No, not like his. Not from the day they were born, not like Hub, born with a full head of hair, attacking the breast as though he had not had milk for a week, the body beautifully formed. Not like Marty, my God, Marty, a redheaded angel, like a prince.

My God, he wanted to cry out, you were all just born. Yesterday you were babies. Yesterday I diapered you. Sarah, he wanted to cry out, where are the years? Where are the years? Why must I leave now?

"You comfortable?" Hy asked, standing with Hub against the windows.

"Huh?" He turned to Hy. "Yes. Certain. I'm all right, kid."

Why now, he thought? Now I have a dollar. Now I can live something, be something for a few years. Now! Why all of a sudden, sent for me now? It don't have to be now, he thought, but knew it was now, maybe before morning, maybe tomorrow or next week, and saw the boys at his grave, all with *yarmelkes*—his sons never wore hats—saw them all saying the *Kadish*, the mourning prayer, for their father.

Ai-yai-yai, there sure wasn't *such* a hurry. Nobody would convince him there was *such* a hurry, this kind of rush. Nobody could tell him that, and wanted somebody to save him, not for him, you understand. Yes, for him. Yes, for me, give me a year with my sons. One year with my four—look at them—and in his mind he kissed each one, held each and kissed their foreheads and sat with them.

"Marty, the curtain," Sarah Simon said, looking up from the knitting, and the redheaded boy flushed, wanted to say something, but moved to one side.

Lev Simon wanted to talk to all of them, and then he knew it was too late for talking. He had never talked, not with Sarah, and with none of them. With Joe, yes, with his oldest. With him, yes. With your oldest son you could talk; this much he had brought with him from his father's house and his grandfather's house.

Not much, but with Joe more than with any human being.

"Looks like rain," Hub said.

Marty nodded. His hands were sweating. To see him lying there like that. "That's an original remark," Marty said. "That one took thought and concentration. That's a profound one, all right. Got any more, Hub? Come up with something else."

Lev Simon had been an unselfish man too long. He felt guilty now, lying motionless, the white hands on the cover, afraid and unable to move. He was selfish now, wanted help now, but you don't change at fifty-seven, and Lev Simon was silent, afraid. Ai-yai-yai-yai, but I am afraid, he thought, and could not move, for always when he had been afraid there was something to do. He could always move around. He could get the truck greased or the car washed, or work on the shelves in the store, but the fear lay on the pillow with him now.

Ai-yai-yai-yai, let me not show it to them, he thought.

"Ought to put the car away," Hub said.

"Don't worry about it," Marty said.

"Mart," Joe said.

"Mart, please," Lev said. "No noise tonight, Mart, what you say, huh?"

"He figures the car'll get hurt," Marty complained. "It's falling apart anyhow."

"In the spring," Lev said. "This time a Buick."

Sarah Simon looked up. "A red one."

"A red one," Lev said.

Sure, Joe thought. A red one. He'll drive a car again, all right.

"White wheels, huh, Pa?" Hy asked.

"Why not?" Lev asked. "Sure, white wheels."

Sure, white wheels, Joe thought. Where? Where will he drive a car with white wheels? And saw a white-wheeled hearse, with a white-uniformed chauffeur. White flowers, he saw white flowers, but under Jewish law there were no flowers, and he saw himself scattering the white flowers, stepping on them, kicking the chauffeur, wanting his father back, and then stopped himself, knew there would be enough of such thinking later, knew he'd have to watch the others. Hold onto the others and take care of his mother.

"A Buick," Lev Simon said. "Damn me, Sarah, you hear? This time a Buick."

"I am happy with a Buick," Sarah said. "Last time you blamed on me, said I didn't want a Buick, but it was you, Lev," she reminded him. "You, not me."

"Nu," Lev said, "no difference whose fault. This time a red Buick with white wheels for Hy. Say, Hy, plenty girls with *this* special car, eh?"

"Plenty girls without this special car," Marty said.

"Oh . . ." Hy said.

"He's got them all, Pa," Joe said.

Lev Simon nodded. "Why not?" Must be some guy, Lev thought, this baby mine. "Why not?" he asked again, and the telephone rang.

Hy squeezed through and went to the phone. They could hear his voice, but what he said was unintelligible, and they waited.

He came back to them, standing in the doorway, his face pained. "Pa," he said. "Pa," he said. "Pa, it's Ben Baratz."

Marty took one step, but Joe held him, put his arm about him, whispered: "Please."

Sarah Simon looked at her husband, and Hub looked from Hy

to Joe to his father. Joe watched Lev Simon, and they saw the man in the bed swallow.

They saw him turn away for an instant and then look at his wife and then at Hy.

"Pa," Hy said. "He wants to come over. He heard Joe and Hub are here. Said maybe he could come over, Pa."

They waited for Lev. They never forgot this was his house, and with him sick, they would not talk. As long as he lay there, they would not talk, and Joe knew if Lev Simon said yes, Marty would talk to Ben Baratz. He would sit with him and be polite to him, as long as Lev lay there—and he would never look at Ben Baratz later.

"Pa!" Hy said. "He's on the phone. Not Aunt Ruth, it's him."

Lev Simon swallowed, holding the covers, and he spoke, looking at the covers. "No," he said.

"What'll I tell him?"

"No. Plain no. No use to lie now that I'm sick today. I'm sick today and I'm sick tomorrow, and I don't see Ben Baratz," and he turned away.

They watched Hy leave the room, and at last Lev Simon said: "Findished with him long time ago. I sure never figure I be mad with a man this long, but him—no—I don't see him."

Marty sat on the chair next to the bed. "It's all right," he said. "It's your house, Pa, you say who comes and who doesn't."

Lev Simon moved his head from one side to the other and back again. "Sure don't figure I hate a man in *my* life, but I don't see Ben Baratz." He looked at Sarah, as though she disapproved. "Can't do this, Sarah, look on this man," and she nodded.

They were together now, all right, all of them, as Hy returned. They were a unit now, and as they sat and lay and stood in this room on this evening, they were all there in the store with Lev Simon and with Ben Baratz on that day in March ten years ago.

All in the store, although only those two had been there at the start.

Marty had come to the store that day from the university, and Lev Simon had sent him downtown to the market. He had the clerk out delivering and he was at the window, doing something or other—he never could remember—when he saw Ben Baratz's car stop across the street.

My ambassador, Lev Simon thought, and he stepped back from the window, moved back to the grate, and he said no to himself.

My treasurer, Lev thought; here come my bookkeeper, he thought, and said no to himself.

Said no, and meant no this day, with the snow turned to ice in the streets and a cold and a cigarette cough, and no business all week. Nothing, maybe lost money this week. Thinking of this as he saw Ben Baratz moving carefully across the street, picking his way slowly.

Lev Simon was a fearful man, all his life afraid, but what he had, what he possessed, was such a dislike of fear that he could not bear it for a long time at a stretch. If he was afraid, then he wanted it done with, finished and quickly, and so now he waited for Ben Baratz. He saw his brother-in-law stamping his shoes clear of snow and ice there outside the door, his head bent, and then he saw the door opening.

Saw his brother-in-law raise his head and grin at Lev Simon. "Nice street," Ben Baratz said, grinning.

"A street," Lev said. "One street or another street."

Ben Baratz took off the gray pigskin gloves, stuffed them in a pocket, rubbed his hands together, the manicured nails gleaming in the light. "Freeze the bones," he said. "Warm there?" and he nodded at the grate, walked toward Lev Simon.

Lev Simon moved, left the grate, and came around, stopping at the end of the counter, resting on the crossbar of the device which held the roll of paper.

"How's business, Lev?" Ben asked.

Lev nodded.

"You make a living," Baratz smiled.

"I work for my living."

"Who said you don't work?"

"I just tell you," Lev said.

"Who don't work?" Ben Baratz asked. "Everybody. Must work in this world," holding his hand out over the grate.

"Sure," Lev said.

"This is the business." Baratz came over and rapped the counter with his knuckles. "You open in the morning, at least you get some business, not chase those farmers."

"Yeah."

"Some life, with those farmers."

"Yeah."

"Lev, you don't know."

"No."

"Not like it used to be."

"No."

"Used to be——"

"What do you want, Ben?" Lev Simon now held the shelf behind him.

"Huh?"

"What do you want, Ben? My business we can talk about in my kitchen? Say, Ben, say it. What do you want?"

Ben smiled at him. "I can't kid you, Lev. That Lev is too smart for me." He stepped back from the counter. "Lev, I need five hundred dollars. Only for a week. I swear before God."

"I think God is pretty tired with you, Ben."

"For a week, Lev. Only a week. For a draft. I can't get a draft from the bank."

"Same with me, Ben. I don't get drafts either."

"Lev, before God, you'll have it in a week."

"In a week, Ben, I won't find you and I won't find God. I think God lost my address."

"Lev, Ruth hasn't even got money for *Pesach*, Passover."

"Not my wife, Ben. Ruth is not my wife. I think I bought enough *Pesachs* for you, Ben. No more *Pesachs* from me."

"I swear, Lev. I swear to you."

Lev found a crumpled paper bag on the counter and began folding it, working carefully to get the sides even as he rolled it. The fire crackled suddenly and Lev saw Baratz jump at the report from the stove.

"Ben, no arguments today. Believe me, Ben, I don't need trouble with you today. This time I'll tell you now, quick: no money."

"Lev, I've got a chance to make fifteen hundred dollars. Even with the market the way it is, fifteen hundred dollars."

"The radio says market went down, Ben. And if the market is dead Monday?"

"It won't fall!"

"I heard that eighteen, nineteen years, Ben. Since I am here in St. Paul, the market never falls when Ben wants money. Always a big market tomorrow." He couldn't stop himself now, and he tore the paper bag, threw the pieces on the floor.

"Just as soon as I come out with money, then there's a big market, huh, Ben? The market waits for Lev, then Ben's cows are worth more than Moses's, huh? Huh?" He was leaning over the counter. "Ben wears diamonds, and Ben has a house. With my mortgage. You know my mortgage, Ben, there in the safety box? Second mortgage is mine, the third mortgage is mine, and if the house is lost, not a nickel back. Ben has a car in St. Paul, a car for Ben on the road, and I must wait for my sons before I can shit. Whatever Ben has—everything—all with other people's money. Huh, Ben? Right, Ben? I lie, Ben?"

"Lev——"

Lev Simon leaned back until his shoulders touched the shelf.

"Ah . . . Ben, this time I'm findish. This time is the end, Ben. No money. No, Ben," and he reached for the register suddenly, found a penny, slammed it on the counter. "Here, Ben, this is for you. One penny, and no more."

Baratz put a cigarette in his mouth, holding one end and inserting the other end between his lips, rolling the cigarette for a moment before he took his hand from it. "Lev, I got to have it."

"Me, Ben. I must have it too."

"Lev, I've got sixteen dollars in my pocket. Maybe enough for gas to Fargo and to eat. All right, I didn't pay you before. This money, Lev. May I drop dead here on the floor if I won't pay."

"You *can't* pay, Ben. You got some kind of sickness in you, not to pay bills. CRAPSHOOTER!" he shouted suddenly. "What kind business have you got to shoot craps with your kids' money?"

"I swear on my daughters, Lev."

"Ben, no. I don't take the blood from you. Whatever you'll say now makes no difference. I don't give money."

Lev pushed his hands into the sweater pockets. "I don't give no more, Ben. I don't work for you all my life. I work for Sarah, for my boys. I don't freeze here in this hole all winter for you, Ben. I don't stink here in the summer, me with my boys, all five together, four o'clock till after dark, my boys with me for a dollar. I don't live like this for you, with fancy shirts and fancy hats." Lev Simon had been saving this. "Who are you? Who are you comes to tell me to give money? Who are you to drive here this day for five hundred dollars; you think you buy a raffle ticket for a quarter?"

"Who are you? Tell me once. Tell me now. Nineteen years is enough. Tell me how you think, to have a brother-in-law, a damn fool who gives money for nineteen years, and what Ben needs he takes from him. Tell me, please, how do you think there in your head, that you figure out I *have* to give you money."

"You're getting excited over nothing," Ben said.

Lev Simon came around the counter then, his hands high in his pants pockets now, so that the cuffs swung free of his shoes, the heels run down as always, the once-black leather scuffed almost gray, with short, thin slivers skinned back from the side like quills swaying as he walked.

"Maybe you right," he said. "Maybe I'm excited for nothing. Maybe so, I can't tell. Maybe cause I'm pretty soon fifty years old already, huh, Ben, and pretty soon I'm dead. Maybe my wife gave me trouble this morning, or maybe I don't want Joe to go away to New York. Maybe my feet got too many corns today, Ben; maybe my legs hurt. Look, Ben, you got something like this?" And he bent, pulled up on his pants, and showed Baratz the varicose veins wrapped around his thin leg like neon tubing, the kneecap fragile and white and no larger than a woman's.

"Maybe I think now I made a big mistake living here in St. Paul, throw nineteen years on this end of the world. Maybe I'm jealous of Ben Baratz today, and maybe I'm cold today. My hands cold and feet cold and face cold, and I know tonight, know it good, that I don't get warmer as long as I live. Maybe one of these things makes me excited and maybe all of these things, and maybe I'm not sorry for Ben Baratz today. Maybe all my sorry is for me."

"Do I want to aggravate you?" Baratz asked. He'd backed away from Lev, facing him, his arms spread wide. "Do you think I *want* to come here and give you trouble? Honest to God, Lev——"

Lev waved his hand. "Even a rabbi don't have so much business with God," he said. "Please, Ben, I'm ashamed for God in this store. This store is too dirty for God."

"Lev, please, give me three hundred dollars. Maybe I can swing it for three hundred dollars. I'll try and get by with three hundred dollars."

Lev Simon laughed, mindful of the effect on Ben, not wanting

to taunt him, but giggling at what Baratz had said. "At least I make two hundred bucks," he said.

Baratz watched him laughing, and the red began to come up into his face, starting below the ears and covering his neck. He backed away, taking one step, resting his weight on that foot, as though he were entering a forbidden room at night, then moving the other foot, his eyes on Lev, the sweat evident on his forehead, small drops in a half moon under his hatband, like steam congealing on a window. Lev saw Ben's shoulders hunched and he saw the arms hanging stiffly, the fingers bent into loose fists. Lev backed up involuntarily, seeing the sudden fury in the man's face, the wild eyes, the hunched body, as though Ben were ready to leap upon him.

"Will you?" Ben seemed to hiss. "Will you, Lev?"

Lev Simon shook his head.

Ben's arm came up, his hand pointing at Simon, the fingers together, pressed tight, extended toward Lev like a knife blade. "All right, you," Baratz said. "All right, you. All right. ALL RIGHT!

"You," Baratz said. "You foreigner. You foreigner, you smuggler, you. All right, I'll fix you," he said, and Lev Simon could hear him breathing deep in his chest, could hear the breath coming out of him as though it were being pushed forward in gusts.

"Think you're a king here," Baratz said. "You foreigner, you alien, you goddamn alien."

"Ben!"

"You're a goddamn alien, don't belong in this country. I'll fix you, you goddamn alien!"

Lev looked past him at the empty street. He was waiting now for somebody to rush in and arrest him. "Ben!"

"You alien!"

Somebody would hear him. "Ben! Ben!"

"Don't let me have the money then." Ben's feet separated and he stood thus now, arms still loose, his legs wide apart, watching

Simon's face, seeing the fear in the eyes. "You don't belong here. Hiding here. You think I don't know why you're hiding here in this lousy hole of the world? You think I'm not wise to you, why you hide here?"

"They'll throw you out," Baratz promised. "Out of the country, you and Sarah and Joe with you. Back to Russia, you alien foreigner."

"Ben!" Lev groaned, and the sound frightened Baratz for an instant. "Ben, what are you talking—— Ben . . . Ben . . . listen . . . Jesus and Christ . . . Ben . . ."

He came forward as Baratz backed away from him, and then Ben turned and ran for the door, pausing there for an instant before he ran from the store, giving it to Simon once more: "I'll get you. Foreigner. Alien. I'll get you."

He watched Ben Baratz hurrying toward the new sedan and Lev Simon walked to the front of the store. He had expected this for nineteen years and now he had it.

"I have it good now," he said aloud, alone in his store. "Now he gave it to me, all right," he said, his hands behind his back, the fingers pulling against each other, the skin dry.

This man—hated guns, hated violence, hated loud talk, hated quarrels and bickering, wanted quiet and gentleness, couldn't bear wool next to his skin.

This man—you could have learned how he felt then, all right,

as Ben Baratz drove off. You could have brought a doctor, used a stethoscope, taken his pulse, put a flashlight in his eyes, and you'd find fear.

He was not sorry for what he had done now, but sad for what must follow. He could not stand Baratz any longer.

Jesus and Christ, he thought, I never figure to get like this.

You a liar, he thought, you always figure this.

Never expect. Always expect. From Ben. Always.

From my own blood. From a Jew. Who then, pautz? he asked himself.

Nineteen years.

He saw Marty stop before the store, get out of the car, and come toward the door. He saw the cigarette in the boy's mouth and was surprised as always that Marty smoked already. How long since the eczema and the asthma?

Nineteen years.

He watched his bareheaded son and then put his hands behind his back, the fingers together, and tried to stop the trembling.

It was then he thought of the revolver there in the drawer of the desk at the rear of the store.

This much about Marty: he worshiped Lev Simon. All right, they all four did, but maybe the hothead even more than the others; perhaps more than Joe, for Marty had more to forgive in Lev Simon.

He couldn't spell fear for you, Marty couldn't, and Lev Simon knew it. Not fear and not humility, really, for no one. Not for Lev Simon either, because in any other human being Marty would have despised the fear, the hesitation, the indecision.

What he had for Lev Simon, actually, was what the father had for all his sons: a feeling of protection, of forgiveness; an inability to watch the man in any trouble, so that of all the boys, Marty alone could not wake his father when Lev Simon slept. Marty would go into the living room on Sunday afternoon, see his father there on the couch, the roto over his head, his feet pushed deep into the cushions, stand for an instant fully intending to wake him, and then turn to the closet, get a coat off the hanger, and cover Lev Simon. Cover him and then forbid Hy to wake him, or Hub or Joe, stand aside only when Sarah Simon came out of the kitchen, the waffle iron ready. He would watch Lev Simon wake, sit upright on the sofa, rub his eyes or look blankly about the room, and then push through the boys to kneel, take his father's shoes, and slip them onto his feet.

Tie the laces and then stand up, push the old man back on the couch, stomach down, lean over Lev to move his fingers about the father's back; moving the long, whip-strong fingers over the shoulders with tenderness and love and care while the old man o-o-o-h-ed and a-a-a-h-ed and said: "There, yah. Yah, there, a-a-a-h, back a little, Marty, a-a-a-a-h, a-a-a-a-h, farther [meaning higher], farther, a-a-a-a-h, a-a-a-h."

If you'd seen them then, before the coronary and the occlusion, stood behind a tree, say, on Ashland Avenue on a Sunday and watched Lev Simon in a beach chair out on the lawn, the four of them around him, all five in white skivvy shirts. If you could have heard them, the five of them, judging the women as they passed, picking the oldest, the ugliest, the stoutest for Lev Simon, he saying no, never, not for his life, they insisting while he refused, the talk turning to laughter until finally, as Lev Simon had known

it would, the talk stopped and Joe and Marty, say, picked the old man out of the chair, lifting him right out of the chair, swinging him and then dropping him to the grass for Marty to sit on his buttocks, until he yelled to Sarah for help—if you'd seen that—maybe you'd have wanted to buy into this family.

If you'd been far out in Lake Nokomis on any Sunday when the Simons invaded the water, the boys around Lev, who floated on an old inner tube. If you'd watched Lev being towed out beyond the safety ropes by the boys, lying there in the sun, unable to swim five feet, could not stay afloat for two minutes, but tossing in the tube, the boys offering sweet talk and honey words, and suddenly tipping him, dropping him into forty feet, letting him go down, Marty and Hy flanking him under the water, and then all four of them lifting him, taking him back to shore, he unresisting, without fear, never happier, knowing they would bring him in, and they lifting him, carrying him to Sarah, wrapping him in a blanket and a towel over his head and letting him sleep—if you'd watched that—then maybe you'd have wondered about *your* house and *your* old man.

Telling it later to Hub and to Joe, how he'd found the old man in the store after Ben Baratz was gone, Marty remembered his father's face.

"Like he'd watched one of us die," Marty told them. "Like he was waiting for the law. Like he'd stopped running, Joe, just like a murderer who got to the wall and turned, threw away his gun, and was waiting for the handcuffs. Hub, you never saw him like that, nobody ever saw him like that, nobody ever saw him like that. If Ben Baratz was there then, I'd have killed him. I swear I'd have strangled him. I couldn't stand to watch Pa's face, Joe."

"What's the matter?" Marty asked. He had seen Ben Baratz traveling toward the loop as he drove to the store. Marty stood

just inside the door, pulling at the cotton gloves, looking at Lev, who was leaning back against the counter.

"Matter? What matter?" Lev asked.

He doesn't even know I'm here, Marty thought, walking back into the store toward the grate. He's all by himself, Marty thought.

"You," Marty said. He could not stand it to see his father's eyes.

"You," he said. "What happened?"

"Nothing happen. Nothing." Lev walked around the counter, passing in front of Marty as he went for the cashier's cage, opened the register, touched the money inside. "Nothing happen. Don't holler at me, please."

"Your face. Like you just gave a quart of blood."

"Ah . . ."

"Where's Baratz? What did he want? He gave you trouble, didn't he? Money?"

"Don't holler, please."

"Pa? What happened?" Softly, now: "Pa, what's the matter?"

"Shah." Lev Simon walked to Marty, put his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Shah, kid," he said, but he wasn't in the store at all. Marty could see he wasn't there.

"He wanted money, didn't he?" Marty held Lev's arm. "Didn't he? You gave him money, didn't you?"

"No money."

"You did."

Lev stared at the boy. "Let go, please, Mart. No money, I say."

"What'd he do to you?"

"No money. Didn't give money."

"You lie," Marty said.

"I lie. Thanks. Let go, please." Lev Simon didn't struggle.

"How much did you give him?"

Lev looked at the boy.

Marty dropped Lev's arm. "I didn't mean it. You know I didn't mean it. It's that Baratz."

"Yeah. Sure."

Marty backed off, away from the grate. "Look what he does to you," Marty said. "Look at you now. You look dead."

"Yeah."

Marty cracked his knuckles. "Can't you snap out of it?" He saw a woman opening the door. "Can't you stop it once and for always?" he whispered, not wanting the customer to hear. "Pa. Jesus, Pa."

"Sure. Go tend the lady," Lev Simon said, and left the boy, walking into the back room of the store.

He walked to the far corner of the back room, toward the space, maybe six feet square, where he had the roll-top desk and the adding machine and the empty filing cabinet Hub had painted, the check printer he never used, and the picture of Joe on the pony. The area was enclosed by compo board reaching to the ceiling, three sides of it, and one side the wall of the room. He opened the compo-board door, hearing it scrape against the floor, and then he closed it and sat down in the swivel chair.

He leaned over, pulling at the bottom drawer of the desk, and the handle came off in his hands. He dropped in on the floor, kicking it with his foot, and opened the second drawer, pulled it out completely, and set it in his lap. He reached over and got the gun out of the bottom drawer and let it drop on the desk, on the coffee bills and the bills of lading, on the old copy of *Life* and the box of bulgy cans of mushrooms.

When he pushed the second drawer back into the desk the handle fell from that, too, and he kicked it, listening to it carom from one wall to the next, slithering along the two-by-fours which formed a base for the compo board. He waited, motionless, until it came to rest somewhere beneath the desk, among the empty

cigarette-butt-filled and dusty pop bottles, among the cartons and bottle caps and stubs of pencils and galoshes and the hunting cap. He pulled the light cord so that he was in the half-dark, reaching for the gun, and got his hand on it, felt the cold steel in his hand.

He sat thus, his hand on the gun, until Marty banged on the door. "It's Ma," Marty said. "On the phone. She wants to know who's going to take the chickens?"

"Yeah."

"Well, who's going to take them?"

Lev Simon pushed the gun inside his belt, between the shirt and the sweater. "Yeah." Nu, the chickens. Well, certainly somebody should take the chickens. What has this with the chickens? Thursday night, so the chickens must go to the rabbi to be killed.

"Yeah, what?" Marty asked, pushing against the door, and Lev rose in the chair.

"All right. Go in the front, please. I'll take the chickens."

"What are you doing there in the dark?"

"I sleep," Lev Simon said. "Go in the front, please."

Always on Thursday morning he bought chickens in the market, took them with him to the store, had them kosher-killed during the day for Sarah. One of the boys took them down to Fourteenth Street, to the rabbi who cut their throats in his basement.

Nu, he thought. Chickens. Nu, all right. He would go now. No use to wait now. This business could be now, or could be later. But to wait—no. Not to sit and wait.

He filled the clip of the gun and then, with Marty in the front of the store, shoved the gun into the inside pocket of the mackinaw.

The two hens lay in a paper carton, their feet tied. The Jew, he thought. Let him be beaten and killed, cold and wet and running and hiding, running like I run. Let him flee pogroms, tortures, homeless and starving, but if the chickens are not killed by the rabbi, then the Jew starves.

Ai-yai, the Jew, he thought.

He carried the box through the store, the keys to the car in his pocket and the gun heavy there against his heart. He set the box on the rear seat of the car and leaned in, stroking the neck of one hen.

"Ben," he said aloud, "where do I run now, Ben?"

He held the box with one hand, and the hen lay with its eyes closed, the lids heavy and warted, like an aged woman's. The hen lay like a judge before him, not noticing him, and he saw it there with its eyes closed.

He ran his hand over the chicken's head, feeling the comb on its head. He moved his hand over the chicken's back, over its rump and down to the leg. He moved his hand up to the chicken's breast and remembered suddenly, bent over, mornings in his father's barn in Russia. "Ben," Lev Simon said. "Ben."

He reached for the neck of the chicken. His fingers ruffled the feathers. He leaned over even more and blew on the neck feathers. He felt them soft and warm against his lips. He put his hand around the neck and stroked the head with the other hand. He squeezed more strongly now and he could feel the flesh bunching between his fingers and he saw the chicken's eyes bulge. The lids opened then, all right, and the eyes were large in their sockets.

"Ben," Lev said, and he saw the chicken's beak open and heard the gurgling in the chicken's throat. He saw the tongue reaching for air and he saw the eyes rolling and he squeezed again, he *really* squeezed. He heard himself breathing as he held Ben Baratz there in the box and he felt himself getting big below and then he thrust the chicken back into the box and, leaning over, holding the box, watching the chicken fight for air, he said: "Be-e-n!" He said: "*Taute*, Father," and he said: "*Taute, taute, taute.*"

He pushed himself upright, closed the door, and walked around to the street side of the car. With his bare hand he brushed snow

off the hood and then, as his right foot lifted for the running board, he slipped, half turning as his foot went forward, his arms in the air, twisting as he fell, trying to reach something, his leg high, and then he dropped on his side, his foot pushing up against the tire, and as he hit the street, his hands full of snow and his hip aching, he wanted suddenly to lie there.

He wanted to turn over, his face in the snow, and never get up, feel his hip aching and the snow in his socks. Let them bury him here, next to the car, and let Baratz do what he wanted.

He was fifty years old and he had been running fifty years. There was no place to run.

Marty saw him leaving the store, saw him disappear toward the car up the street, and went to the telephone. He found Joe at the Y and told Joe to come right away. Now, take a cab. He told Joe how Lev Simon had looked.

"Joe, please," said Marty, who had never asked for help before. "Joe, please," said Marty, who was scared for his father.

Him, Ben Baratz thought, driving away from the store. Him, that greenhorn, he's all right if he can write his name, that one I have to beg for money. That one, that cheap greenhorn, I have to come to him for money. Sits there in that store, in that stinkpot of a store, he says no to me.

What does he think? Ben Baratz thought. What does he think,

that I'll let him go this way? That greenhorn, him with his sons who are too good for my daughters, and he saw Marty driving toward the store and wanted to spit at the boy.

A family, he thought. A brother-in-law I have, all right.

He sat spread-legged in the car, the smooth, never-more-than-a-year-old car, with one heater blowing at him from over the clutch and another, the regular heater, blowing from beyond the opposite door, the suède jacket unzipped and his hat pushed back on his head. There was a compass in the car, and a machine attached to the steering rod which ejected a lighted cigarette when he pressed a lever. There were maroon silk seat covers, real silk, and the sun visor above the windshield was the big size with a mirror and a comb attached to the underside.

On the back seat was a cashmere blanket—he'd told Ruth it cost fifteen dollars—and beside the blanket, the leather gleaming from the shine in South St. Paul, the pair of magnificent tooled cordovan boots which came up just above the ankles, with the BB interlocking on the sides, like a brand.

Ben Baratz opened the glove compartment and took out a leather bag the size of a binocular case and opened it as he drove. He reached for the bourbon flask as he drove toward the loop, and then he thrust it back into the case and flung the case into the compartment.

He wasn't afraid of Lev Simon; that fact he wanted clear with himself. He wanted that on the line, straight out; he'd fix Lev before this day was out, be sure of that. He had kissed Ruth good-by at eight o'clock and should have been in Fargo by dark, but he could sleep in St. Cloud, fifty miles north of St. Paul. No hurry now, not with sixteen dollars in his pocket. He drove down onto Jackson Street, turning at Kellogg Boulevard and into the parking lot across from Annalora's pool hall. He came into the place the back way, using the rear door, as he would have done in St. Cloud, in Minneapolis, in Fargo. He used back doors,

this man, as those furtive, starched, collar-attached, and diamond-ring-wearing citizens spoke from the side of their mouths. They could not offer the time of day speaking aloud, nor the correct direction to a stranger, nor even condolences to a mourner, but must speak always as though the blue uniform stood within hearing distance, and so with Ben Baratz. He had come now to accept the rear entrance, the side door, in whatever he did.

The broker in South St. Paul had said no an hour ago, laughed at Baratz's suggestion that he be trusted with the beef, and now there was nothing to do but fix Lev. That he *had* to do before the day was out. Lev would not sleep in his bed tonight, Ben Baratz would see to it, be sure of that.

Tom Annalora's pool hall was a wide room, once a branch post office, which ran from the street to midway in the block. Ben Baratz stood now at the rear, in the aisle which separated the green-topped surfaces, the two never-used billiard tables at his right. The other tables on that side were all snooker, and to his left were the pocket billiard tables, used for rotation by the novices, for eight ball, for bottle pool, and by the experts, by the money players, for banks and straight pool. Annalora had last year replaced the mesh pockets with tubes, so that the balls disappeared, running into the tubes and under the table, onto the basket below the rear bank of the table, where the racker gathered them.

Now, at three o'clock, the room was filled, with all but the billiard tables in use. The vags sat on the high benches along the wall, drinking and waiting for a miracle, their hats pushed back, and each with a bottle of beer, the labels dangling from the wet surface. The smoke had risen almost to the level of the unprotected light bulbs which came down from the two-story ceiling to perhaps twelve feet off the floor. He looked quickly for one of Lev's sons or for Lev and, seeing none of them, nor seeing Lev in the room, he said to himself: Lev won't be *here*. That's

one sure thing, he isn't here; Lev is back there in the store and the laundryman knows how scared Lev is. The laundryman and me. He was in no hurry now to fix Lev. The room was warm; it was his kind of room: the balls clicking, the talk, the smoke, the bets offered and accepted, and he remembered now that he had cattle up Fargo way. He'd get them someway. A carload: steers and heifers, and the market humping on heifers, he could get ten or ten-fifty on the heifers, maybe eleven dollars in Omaha. He could send them through to Omaha, down to Sioux Falls, and then over, let the Nebraska broker clip him if he liked. He, Ben, could, even with a strange broker, take more out of Omaha than he'd ever get from South St. Paul. He should have done this long ago: established himself with Omaha, or even with Kansas City.

That Lev. To be such a *schwein*. He walked forward now, toward the front of the room, looking at the big black scoreboard where, during the baseball season, Tom Annalora leased a wire ticker and where he, Ben Baratz, had waited many times for his team to come home ahead and where how many times had he torn up a twenty-five-dollar bet or a fifty-dollar bet? Tom Annalora always behind the counter, riffling through an ordinary grocery-order book, to extract the carbon of Ben's ticket and tearing it, and waiting for another team to finish his way.

How much money have I given this bootlegging dago? Ben thought. If I had a dollar now for every bet. If I had a dollar now for every fine I lost to him; I made that punk guinea a rich man myself. I made him fat myself, the pepper, Ben thought, and Lev could get me out of this. Lev! A stinking five hundred dollars and I'm clear, I'd ship to Omaha, I'd have enough on this one deal, on that stinking half car of beef from Fargo. Lev! All right, Mr. Lev, he thought, walking to the front of the room. All right, you'll get it, he thought, and he was alongside the counter, turning to put his elbows on the glass and watch the banks game at the first table, the money table.

Tom Annalora came out of the office, walking around the counter, counting a sheaf of bills: fives and tens and twenties, not a dollar bill among them, Ben noticed. He counted from his left hand to his right, the bills stiff and sharply green; new money drawn that morning from the bank, Ben knew. He stopped before Ben Baratz, his head lowered to the money, not looking at Ben.

"How's it, Ben?" Still counting.

"Tom." Ben watched him. He was on the credit side of forty, better than six feet, quite thin, with narrow shoulders and an almost concave chest. He wore a pea-green gabardine shirt, the sleeves unrolled and the cuffs held by three buttons. His tie was a deep green and he wore Oxford-gray herringbone trousers with no cuffs. His black shoes were severe, unadorned, and made in military fashion, and they shone like patent leather. His tie clasp held a magnificent solitaire, and on the little finger of his right hand was a three-carat diamond in a gold setting. He had black curly hair combed back from his forehead, and he had beautiful white teeth.

"You got action today," Ben said.

"Stiffs. Bunch of stiffs. There won't be twenty cents for the sweeper."

"You'll get the rent." Ben could not take his eyes from the money. He, Ben, had counted two hundred and fifty dollars, picking up the count from that instant when he saw Tom. "You make out."

He had sixteen dollars in his pocket. Sixteen dollars and twenty cents, four bucks having gone for gas and oil. Sixteen dollars to keep him, and that Lev. God damn that Lev.

"Let me use the phone, Tom."

Annalora nodded his head behind him, at the office door. "The desk is locked, Ben." He smiled. He folded the bills once and shoved them into his pocket. "Not a dollar showing."

"I know where to get it if I need it." Ben smiled, punching Annalora's arm.

Annalora smiled with him. "You make out too, jockey." He moved around behind the counter.

Ben walked toward the office, into the small room with the ash-wood desk and the deep red leather chair which bent almost to the floor when you pushed against it. He stopped at the water cooler, used a paper cup for a drink, and he said: You get a chance now, Lev. I give you a chance now. Use your head now, Lev.

He gave the operator Lev's number, sitting on the edge of the leather chair, the upright telephone on a corner of the desk. Ben held the receiver, his body at an uncomfortable angle, and he began to breathe just a little hard. The rat, Ben Baratz thought, and he wanted to hang up. Why call him again, Ben Baratz wondered, so he can give it to me again? He heard the rings, wanted to hang up, wanted suddenly to be in his house, with Ruth in the kitchen, and the girls cleaning the bedrooms, the car in the garage and snow falling. A good dinner, chicken and dumplings, that's what he wanted now, and a bottle in the sideboard there in the dining room, and listening to Phil Spitalny, him with that girl orchestra; he'd seen them once on the stage at the Orpheum. Some girls.

He heard the ringing and wondered now whether Lev was in the store; maybe he'd locked the store. Maybe Lev and the banker, those hicks, maybe they were all out and they'd get him, Ben. Lev could tell them some story, the rat would lie about something, and they'd get him. He wanted to call Ruth, or be with Ruth now, and he hated this life. What kind of a life for a man always alone? Never with his family. And he heard Marty say: "Hello."

Ben Baratz waited a moment and he heard Marty say hello

again and hello a third time. Ben could feel his Adam's apple moving, and he could feel the sweat on his hand, the receiver wet and glowing with sweat. He wanted to get out of there; out of the office and out of the pool hall, away from St. Paul; to hell with the cattle, he'd tried to make a living for his family, hadn't he? He'd tried, hadn't he? What else did they want from him? A brother-in-law who would just as soon see his own flesh and blood starve, just let them starve, what did he care if Ruth and the girls were hungry? Did he care about Ruth and the girls, or about Ben? He didn't care, and how about Sarah, was she any better, any more caring? Who cared? Nobody cared and he was alone.

"Hello. Hey, hello, who is it?" Marty asked.

Ben Baratz spoke in a falsetto. He tried the falsetto, pitching his voice. "Is Lev there? Lev," he said.

"No, he's gone. Ben?" It's him, Marty thought. "Who is this?" But Ben Baratz had hung up and sat quiet on the edge of his chair, rubbing his hands on the trousers. He couldn't stop his leg from shaking. The right leg was trembling and he couldn't stop it. He sat with his hands around the thigh of his right leg and he held it tight, squeezed it tight, trying to stop it, and for a moment felt himself coming apart, could feel himself going to pieces; his leg trembling and squeezing the thigh, the fingernail of his left thumb into the right hand, deeper and deeper into his right hand, and his chin trembling, the saliva coming up, coming up, and his lips moist and then wet with the saliva, and his mouth open, his face slack-jawed, until at last, with a great effort, he seemed to leap from the chair and out of the office into the huge room.

He saw Tom Annalora standing against the blackboard, his hands in his pockets, watching the banks game, and in the warmth of the huge room, with the smoke and the talk, the other, the few moments in the office, seemed as far off now, as removed as those years in Russia. He stood beside Tom Annalora.

"How are you holding, Tom?" Ben Baratz asked, both watching the banks game.

"I'll meet the payroll." Then: "That's shooting them, boy," to the middle-aged postman who had crossed the eleven ball into the far corner, banking once from the near end of the table, the ball moving true, dropping into the chute without touching a side of the pocket.

"Spare a hundred?" Ben asked. You could not have heard them speaking if you stood more than two feet from them.

"I can't spare a dime, Ben."

"Me, Tom."

"You, Tom." His lips barely moving, as though he sat with a dummy on his knee. "You, Tom. I won't make a hundred today."

"I'll give you a check." Begging this hoodlum for money, Ben thought.

"Anybody can write checks. My sweeper can write checks."

Ben Baratz felt the gabardine shirt beginning to itch. He felt the collar of the shirt, and he felt his feet sweating. "Tom, for God's sake. I need it, Tom."

"I need it."

"You can turn it in Monday," Ben said desperately. He'd be out of this Monday, somehow.

Annalora turned to him then. He turned slowly, moving his head slowly, and when he looked at Ben he might have been looking at a woman of whom he had tired, or at an employee who had informed to a rival gang, who had tried to arrange a hijacking. He might have been looking at a Canadian border patrolman who had taken his money for years and now wanted more, this official who was in as deep as he himself. "Beat it," he said.

"Tom." Ben touched the man's shirt. "Tom, for God's sake." The hundred had become now as his life. He had to get money

from somebody, had to feel as though somebody would give him money. Not five hundred now, but a hundred.

"Tom, please." He *had* to get the money, at least this hundred.

Annalora looked him over. He looked at him carefully, his hands in his pockets still, his eyes just the least bit filmed, the lids drooping the slightest degree. He watched Ben and he pointed at Ben's ring. "The stone," he said. "Leave the stone."

Ben watched the finger as he raised his hand. He made a fist of his hand, looking at the fist and at the ring. He remembered the interval in Lev's store. He remembered the cattle. Now, standing before Annalora, before the gambler and bootlegger, the low company, he was as a boy being terrorized and humiliated before his gang by the neighborhood bully. Standing defenseless before the bully, helpless, despising the bully and himself. Ben Baratz held his fist before him and then, with the rage running through him, unthinking in the enveloping circle of danger, Ben Baratz moved the fist, unclenched his hand, put his hand over his crotch.

"Here," he said, and his other hand gripped his trousers. "Here, you guinea," he said, remembering this hoodlum, this bootlegger, this thief with whom he had gambled and wenched. "Here," he said, and watched Tom Annalora begin to laugh, laughing as silently and as undetected as he spoke. He watched Tom Annalora laughing and saw the admiration in the gambler's eyes and in his face.

Annalora laughed still, his right hand coming out of his pocket. He came out with the money and unfolded the roll, turning it, so that the twenties were on top, and he counted five of them, snapping each bill expertly as he pulled it from the roll, folding the five bills with one hand, thrusting the bills at Ben Baratz.

"Ben, I like you," returning the roll to his pocket. "I like you, Ben," still laughing. "You kike bastard." He laughed. "I like you," he said, sobering now at last. "Monday," he said. "Shove the

check. You know where with the check. My sweeper can write checks."

Ben took the money. He pocketed the bills quickly, his eyes taking in the room once swiftly, trying to see if he had been watched by someone he knew who might tell Lev, or Lev's sons, or any man with whom he might have future commerce. He reached into Annalora's shirt pocket for the single tin-foil-wrapped cigar there, and he peeled the wrapping carefully. He bit the end carefully and spat on the floor and waited while Annalora exhibited the gold, made-in-England cigarette lighter and produced a flame for the cigar. "You're wrong," Annalora said, smiling. "Ben, you're wrong and you're no good, but I love ya. I love ya, you Jew bastard," he said.

They watched the banks game end and then, with the table idle, the balls racked, the players gone, Annalora looked at Ben. "You got guts, Ben?"

"Got guts for you, gambler." No cattle now. No Ruth now, or the girls, or Lev, or the farmer up Fargo way.

"Fifty points for fifty bucks. One game. I got time for one. You're loaded now, Ben. One game, either way."

"You lost fifty," Ben said, and he was getting out of his jacket. He offered the jacket to Annalora. "Hang it there with yours," he said. "Not here in this stink-hole you keep."

Annalora took the jacket, and as he moved from the black-board Ben Baratz said: "Bring my cue there. For you, gambler, my own cue." In a wastebasket behind the ash-wood desk Tom Annalora kept a dozen cues, eighteen-ounce matched cues, bought from Willie Mosconi, the pocket billiard champion, when the Italian had given an exhibition in St. Paul. These were the special mallets, used only by the money players: by Tom, by Ben Baratz when he was in town, by Steinfeld, the theater owner, by Abe Schmukler, who had been the blocking back for Tom Annalora in high school.

Ben Baratz pulled the sleeves back on his shirt so that the wrist-bone showed below each cuff. He pushed his hat back on his head and walking to a supporting pole in the center of the room, used the powder, pushing up on the plunger as one washing his hands in a men's room. He let the powder cover his hands and then, his arms wide and free of his body, shaking his hands free of the bulk of the powder, he rubbed his hands together. He spoke to no one, but they on the benches, those sitting high up with the beer, those standing in the aisle, those who moved from one side of the table to the other as the player needed space for his shot, they saw Ben Baratz. They saw him walking away and they saw Annalora coming out of the office with the cues in one hand, with a fistful of unused squares of chalk in the other, and Ben Baratz knew they watched. He knew they watched him and he knew they would follow, standing a respectful distance from the money table, standing silently along the blackboard, arms folded, quiet and awed, holding their breaths before each important shot as it appeared. Their admiration was expressed during the game with a glance at the man beside them, or, when a really difficult ball had been removed, by letting their breaths out slowly. Nobody would know the amount of the bet, but in whispers the stakes would be guessed at first ten dollars. At ten dollars, at twenty-five dollars, at fifty, at one hundred; and finally tonight, on the street corners, and around the loop, the bet would reach five hundred dollars then and the game would be retraced, argued, talked about with never a word from Annalora.

Annalora and Ben Baratz stood on the blackboard side of the table, chalking their cues now, working the chalk carefully over the packed felt striking surface. A wire ran over their heads, wooden beads strung along each side of a square, wooden block in the center, and Annalora raised his hand for a racker. They waited for the racker, and then Annalora threw a half dollar across the green felt to the former. "Call it, Ben," he said, and Ben waited

for the coin to rise in the air, to be caught, to be slapped by the racker on his wrist, the other hand covering the half dollar.

"Heads," Ben said. The racker lifted the palm, nodded at Ben, and Annalora said: "You got it," to the racker, who pocketed the coin. The high bench behind the table was filled now, and men came slowly toward the corner of the room. All those who did not play now came toward the table, and the others, they on the snooker tables and the novices across the aisle, these would shoot and then stand on tiptoe to look toward the corner.

Ben waited now, the cue resting easy in his hand, while the assemblage quieted. He bent once, his left arm flat, the cue held loosely in his right hand and moving against the flesh near the striking end, in the curve made by the thumb, the forefinger, and the middle finger, and then he bent lower still and the door opened. He heard the door open at his side and a man stamping his feet hard on the floor, before the newcomer was taken by one of the spectators and whispered to and told the guessed amount of the bet. As Ben heard the feet stamping he straightened up, stood upright, waiting, as does the tournament golfer who hears a sigh escaping as he addresses the ball on the eighteenth green. Ben waited a moment longer and then bent again. Dumb farmers, he thought moving the cue, as a batter swings when he approaches the plate. Dumb farmers, he thought, and now, preparing to shoot, he was better than all of them. He was the center of this room now, he knew, and there were no cattle now at all, there had never been cattle, nor buying cattle for another person, nor asking for money. Let them watch, the dumb farmers. Let them watch some real pool now, and he struck the ball. He took the nine ball from the last row of the triangle, from the right side, freeing it completely, the other four balls of the last row moving slowly and easily to the back and side rails and stopping now off the rails. The nine moved down from the back rail to the center of the table, near the blackboard-

side middle pocket. Ben watched his cue ball go to the side rail, carom to the rear, and then, as the English, the spin, took effect, come around so that it was a few inches above and across from the nine ball. He waited, still sprawled over the table, until the eleven ball dropped, listening to the a-a-a-hs and o-o-o-o-hs as the spectators watched the shot. At last he straightened up slowly and deliberately, moving around the table, picking up a square of chalk as he moved, going to the side, as a defense lawyer who has left the jury, breathless, now turns his back to them for a moment before proceeding.

"Nine," Ben said, and he shot carefully, the cue ball following after the impact, but taking the high, left-side English and going to the rail, then along the rail, to the far end of the table and the four balls there.

He took them easily, using a soft, straight, no-Englished cue ball that might have had strings around it which ran to his fingers. He was shooting carefully, but he played with a flair, taking his shots, turning his back to them at the instant of impact, as a really good puncher walks away from his opponent to the neutral corner, never looking back, having felt the jawbone against the left fist when the hook landed, or against the right, when he has crossed, and waits now for the count to end. Ben played thus, running eight balls in a row, then, faced with a table-length shot or a side bank, choosing the latter and using too much English, the called ball, the green six, rolling gently around the pocket, as a basketball travels around a rim and then falls out, and finally moving away from the side, off the rail and out into the green felt.

The racker wrote an eight in the first square before the B, turned to Ben, who nodded at him and stepped back as Tom Annalora came around the table to the cue ball. Ben Baratz moved backward, not looking behind him, knowing now that there, against the rail of the next table, a space would develop

for him. He felt the wood against his behind, leaning against it, the cue hammer touching the floor, held in his right hand, and his other arm across his chest so that one elbow touched the back of the other hand. He was flanked by men, but he looked neither to right nor left, his face sober and, he thought, inscrutable.

This is what he loved best, to be the cynosure of everyone there, the only other traffic in the room now two occupied tables far down at the rear where the high school kids romped through rotation. The door opened steadily now as word went through the loop that the straight-pool match was on. Behind Annalora, along the counter, the spectators were two and three deep.

Annalora dropped two balls and then missed an extraordinarily simple straightaway shot in the near right corner, leaving five balls in not impossible lies. Moving to address the cue ball, Ben Baratz felt the touch in his hands, felt the sureness within him. He was right today, he couldn't miss today, and he knew it as every athlete has ever known it, as every writer knows when he is writing well, or as an actor, dressing in his room ten minutes before curtain, feels the certainty within him and grins delightedly at himself in the mirror.

Fool with me, Ben Baratz said to himself. Fool with me, you pautz, he said to himself. " 'Leven there once across in the corner," he said, choosing to bank the ball, gambling needlessly, for it lay perfectly aligned with the right near corner. He had played enough to know the effect of such recklessness against a losing opponent, and now he struck the cue ball sharply, using a great deal of English, then moving to the backside of the table, waiting for the cue ball which went to the rail after the eleven had been struck and was traveling now up the table to the other balls while the object, the eleven, dropped easily into the corner pocket.

He ran the four balls, leaving the maroon seven just beyond the area where the fourteen balls would be gathered by the racker, and then waiting, moving backward toward the counter until he

could hear the breathing of the spectators behind him, he watched the balls being assembled in the ivory triangle.

Ben Baratz took twelve of the fourteen balls before he missed, and then Tom Annalora ran the two others, tried for an impossible break, the fifteenth ball over near the far rail down the table from the triangle, and he missed.

He missed and Ben had run eight balls, had called the ninth, the yellow two for a side pocket, when Annalora said: "All right," handing his cue to the racker, and Ben straightened, not daring to smile, since an outward sign of triumph was as taboo, in as bad taste, as looking at the opponent. The loser first: if he complained, if he joked about the beating, if he began the conversation, then, all right; then bantering and crowing by the victor was permissible.

The racker had Annalora's cue between his knees, his legs bent as he racked the balls, leaving the table prepared now for the next players. Ben Baratz let his cue rest there alongside the man. He turned to Annalora, who stood now next to him, their stomachs almost touching, and soberly he extracted the roll.

"Pretty goddamn lucky," Annalora said, and he was smiling, lighting a cigarette, letting the smoke come out of his nostrils.

"That's it, lucky."

"You been practicing, ya kike bastard."

Ben Baratz smiled. "For a guinea? Practice for a guinea, Tom? You crazy?" He took three twenties from the five bills in his hand. "Give me a ten," he said. "Give me two fives, gambler."

"I'd like to have you when there's nobody around," Tom Annalora said. He had the roll in his hand and he took the bills, offering two fives, which Ben held in his hand now.

"For your life," Ben said. For *your* ring, for *your* car, for the joint here, for what you got. He nodded at the two fives. "We're even, Tom. Fifty I win, fifty I pay back," and he waited now for the loser's anger, but Tom Annalora slapped his shoulder. He

Marty hung up the telephone, leaned out over the cashier's cage, shaking his head at Joe and at Hub, who stood against the counter in his jacket, holding the books he'd brought from the university.

"Baratz isn't there," Marty told them. "They said at Annalora's he *was* there."

"How long ago?" Joe asked.

"They didn't say."

"Call the rabbi again," Joe said.

"Why don't you tell me what happened?" Hub said. "Walk in here like somebody's killed. Like a morgue here." He set the books down on the counter.

"Try the rabbi, Mart," Joe said.

"Smart guys," Hub said.

Marty dialed the rabbi's number, asked again for his father, and hung up, shaking his head once more. "He's with Baratz," Marty decided.

"Money," Hub said. "It's money again."

Marty came around the side of the cage silently, his hands in his pockets, looking at them and nodding. He nodded at his brothers and turned suddenly, kicked viciously at the wooden cashier's cage, his foot sliding off the enclosure into a wire upright stand which held bags of potato chips.

The stand toppled, the bags falling under and around it, and

as they stood motionless for a moment Marty began kicking at the bags, using both feet, bringing his heels down on the potato chips. Hub could hear the chips being smashed, being ground against the wood, the bags opening and spilling before he and Joe got Marty finally.

Marty stood unresisting in their arms, shorter than either of them, looking up at Joe now. "Why does Pa give it to him, Joe?" Marty asked. He was just a little boy now, looking up at his brother. His arms were at his sides and he stood in the tight circle of Joe's arms, and he shook his head.

"Joe," and his eyes pleaded with his brother, "why, Joe? Why did this one man come after our lives, Joe? What did Pa do to him? Pa did something to him; you can't scare Pa like that."

"Nothing," Joe said.

Marty nodded. "Something," he said. "Not Pa," he said. "This man's got something on us, Joe; he's bleeding us. He's bleeding Pa; I saw Pa old and sick-afraid an hour ago. Since I was a kid, Joe." He nodded. "Like a tax collector. Like we owed him. Tell me," and he shook his brother. "Tell me, so I'll know. Tell me so I don't fall apart when I look at my old man and see him dead, standing on his feet and nothing left in him. Why do we all have to work so Baratz can take it from us? Pa gets up at five o'clock in the morning. Now, in March, and every morning. I hear him. I lay in bed and think of him shaving and getting into that wool shirt and out in the back yard into the truck with the leather seat cold as ice. Every morning when I'm in bed, and I feel like some kind of a traitor to let him do it."

Marty was shaking his head, not looking at Joe, while Hub was on his knees, straightening the mess the younger brother had made.

"I think all the time," Marty said, "can't get him out of my head, working his years away for us. He don't eat right, Joe, he

don't live right. Twelve hours a day in here, and cold in here, and he's sick. Sometimes at night, at supper, I can't look at him when I see how old he's gotten, the teeth gone on him, and thin and the hands all torn. I think of Baratz and I want to kill him."

Joe led Marty to the counter, his arm about the boy. This was the day for it, he thought. How long did I think to hide it from them? How do I tell them, Joe wondered; these young Americans, these citizens of the state, born at St. Joseph's Hospital, with all the rights and privileges? Feeling a little guilty now because he was jealous at this moment of what they had.

"Hub," he said, summoning his brother. "Mart, listen. I don't care what Pa says now," he said to his brothers. "Don't make any difference any more," he said. "Time enough," he said, and then he told them.

Gave it all to them as Lev Simon had entrusted it to Joe, watching his brothers as he spoke, seeing the color come into Marty's face as he learned how Lev and Sarah and Joe Simon had come to America.

He told it slowly and thoroughly, the business with the gun, for they had never learned where Lev Simon had come by the revolver in the desk. They listened to it all and then Marty said: "You. I don't understand it. Pa, all right, he's scared, but you. You're like us. You were a kid, you were nothing. This is your country."

Marty stepped away from the counter, confronting Joe. "You," he said, "you could find out. You don't have to take this. What the hell is the matter with you?" he asked as Hub went into the back room to put away his books.

"What the hell is the matter with me?" Joe repeated. "What could I find out? He wouldn't let me."

"He wouldn't let you. What the hell did he have to know about it? You sap," Marty said to his brother. "What are they going to do, throw you three out? What are they going to do, break

up a whole family? Does it make sense to you they'd split us in two? What is the old man, a criminal? What did he do to this country but good? What harm did he bring it? Did he rob banks? Did he breed killers? Did he become a Communist? Is there anyone in this whole country," Marty asked, the citizen, "who is in love with it more? The way he feels about this country. The way he talks of this country. You, you sap."

"Kid," Joe said, quieting Marty. "Mart. You forgot one thing, Mart."

"What? Tell me, then."

"Mart. Oh, my God. I'm an illegal alien. Pa, Ma. Me. We're in here wrong and you're a citizen, and you don't know."

"Listen, he told me when I was a kid, Pa squared me away. I learned history in school and I learned laws."

"Why didn't you ask then?" Mart demanded. "Why didn't you go find out? There are ways to find out. There are lawyers; we didn't have to be in on it."

Joe was a little annoyed with his brother now. "You damn fool, you. Comes here with nothing. *Nothing*. A wife and a kid and a gun. Comes here and he's near thirty and can't speak the language. He's here and for the first time in his life the lock works on the door," remembering now what Lev Simon had told him. "Comes here and he can sleep nights, no more borders to run. Makes a living here. Look." Joe moved his arm. "Look once, or are you blind, or haven't you anything in your head but fight and hit and kick?"

"He gets a truck. Takes his family for a ride. Buys a store, makes a living, sends his kids to the university, you goddamn fool. He's got a truck, he's got a store, he's got a car, and always a hundred to spare. I want to go to Chicago, here's a hundred. Hy wants a bike, okay. Ma needs a fur coat, okay." Joe pointed at the rear, toward Hub. "Him, Hub, goes to college and joins ROTC. Going to be an officer. Pa couldn't believe it. He was

so goddamn happy he couldn't believe it. His kid an officer in America. A Jew an officer, he told me, he couldn't believe it.

"What do you want from him? He told me he didn't deserve all this. He told me everything since he came across that border is velvet. He told me he got ten years left. Maybe. Maybe ten, he said, and a couch to sleep on and two kids want to be medics. He told me maybe he'll live to see his kids medics. What do you want? Tell me?" Joe held his brother's shoulders. "Do you want me to play with the man now? Start with him now, get the fear in him again?"

"All right."

"Mart, listen." Joe was sweating. "We're here illegally. One in a thousand they throw us out. One in a million, but can you think how it is to live with that?"

"No," Marty said. He, Marty, was ready for the combined armed forces of the United States of America. Let them come for his father; he, Marty, would handle them.

"No." Joe shook his head. "You couldn't. You'd have been in Washington ten years ago. I'm not you, kid, and Pa's not you. Pa says never ask for more luck, Mart, and maybe I'm his son, maybe I'm afraid too."

"Enough afraid," Marty decided. "This is the last day for afraid in this house," he said, and Joe knew what he had started now, all right. He knew it would come now. He was very tired and he didn't care, and at that moment Hub ran into the store from the back room. He ran at both of them and stood before them, his arms spread, and looked at them.

"The gun's gone," he whispered.

Marty wheeled and took one step, but Joe held him. "How do you know, Hub? For sure?"

"Jesus, I went into the office. The door was pushed open. Jesus, it's a mess back there. The drawer was out. The shell box open on the desk." He began to tremble. "What has he done?"

What does he want with a gun? Holy smokes, what has he done?"

"Marty, get your jacket," Joe ordered. He felt an elation within him which he would never understand. Let it all come now, he thought. Damn me, he thought, let it come. "Hurry, Mart."

To Hub: "Leave a note for what's-his-name, the delivery boy. Tell him to go home."

Marty was running and Joe was running as Hub stood there. Joe leaped to the cashier's cage and found the keys to the store.

Marty came out, zipping his jacket, and Joe buttoned his coat. "We'll take the Ford," Joe said.

"What?" Hub asked. "Where? Where are you going? What does he need the gun for? Where are you going? The store. What's going on here today? Jesus, what's happening to all of us?"

"Shit," Marty said to his brother, and he and Joe ran for the door.

"The customers," Hub said.

"Stay here, then," Joe said, and then Hub leaped at them, grabbed them both at the door, held them both.

"Without me, huh?" he asked, and he pushed Marty aside. He would not shove Joe, but Marty was younger.

"I'll drive," Hub said. "Pray," he said.

"Pray for that Baratz," Hub said, letting Joe go out first, pushing Marty through the door, locking it and testing it.

Lev Simon had let Ben Baratz go through town; through the loop, onto University Avenue, the main thoroughfare to Minneapolis, staying maybe a semaphore behind. He'd watched Ben Baratz turn on Lexington, drive through Como Park, seen the day's light, powdery snow lying over the picnic grounds. He'd followed him out on Lexington Avenue, watching the city fall behind, the ordered streets disappearing, only roadhouses now, a farmhouse occasionally, the open snow-filled wood shacks off the road where Sunday drivers bought produce in the summer.

He had a truck between Ben Baratz and the Pontiac when they turned there at the Lord of Minnesota House, where Joe and Hub brought girls. He stayed behind the truck as they reached Number 10, going toward Anoka, beyond Ramsey County.

The fields came up to the road here with no shoulders at this point. In the summer, before harvest, the wheat was higher than a man, higher than a car, and Lev Simon would stop his car on the road, leave Sarah and Hy there, and walk to the wheat, stand smelling the grain. In the summer, at such moments, he felt like lying down in the wheat, crushing the grain with his body, and resting, face down, against the ground. He could feel excited from the wheat in the summer, and now, before it had thawed, he thought of the land as a woman heavy in pregnancy, waiting for sun and rain to deliver her from the winter bed.

Lev Simon was a half mile behind Ben Baratz when the truck

turned there, heading for Turtle Lake. Holding the wheel with one hand, he reached over to the glove compartment, found the gun, and let it drop on the seat beside him. He heard the hens cackling on the back seat and he saw Ben Baratz's car leap forward.

"Damn fool," he said aloud. "Don't help now, Ben. Not you and not me," and he moved into the middle of the road before he set his foot down on the gas pedal.

"Ben, wait," he said aloud, hearing the hens behind him. "Can't run, Ben," he said. "No place to run.

"Nu, Lev," he said, and looked in the mirror, trying to find another car behind him, delay this for a time, but saw nothing, knew that he must, and felt his hands slip on the wheel, the sweat making the wheel glisten.

"Ai-yai-yai," he said aloud, not wanting this, but unable to escape now. "Ai-yai-yai," he said, knowing there was no refuge now, no turns in the road for him, no trucks to hide behind and so postpone the rendezvous.

"Nu," he said, and stepped down on the gas pedal, for he could not continue his fear any longer.

The land on each side of the road held only shucks tied and spaced regularly, so that if you looked from one end of the field to the other you were reminded of a mass calisthenic demonstration, figures motionless and waiting command; or of a regiment standing at attention. The fields were covered with snow and the shucks were snow-capped. The fresh snow lay over the fields, and the road had been traveled little since the morning's fall.

The car ahead began to sway slightly, and Lev Simon hoped Baratz would turn over. Let him roll there, he thought, and I'll drop a match to the tank. "Go, Ben," he said aloud, "go faster, Ben, and kill yourself, you *mauser*, informer, you. Turn, Ben, and die; a *mauser* should not live."

He felt the pull in his groin and he felt his hands wet on the wheel. He felt the wool of the trousers against his calf and against

his thigh where the shorts had slipped up around the crotch, and he cursed the wool which he had always hated.

"Ah, Ben, Ben, Ben," Lev said, and felt his lips moving, could not stop his lips from trembling. He remembered the *dorf* now and the two of them; he and Ben starting out for the synagogue and then swinging wide toward the river to lie on the bank in the summer and smoke the cigarettes Baratz had stolen from his father.

"You and me, Ben," he said, trying now to catch the other car quickly and get this finished. He didn't know how long he could stand this, his legs twitching and his stomach so he wanted to puke, and his lips moving.

"Here, Ben, on this road, and if our fathers knew now. If they had known, Ben, they with their beards and the *tsises*, afraid of the Russian always, as I am afraid of you now, running in the dark mornings to the synagogue with the phylacteries and the *tales*, prayer shawls, under their arms.

"BEN!"

Why didn't he stop? And he was very angry with Baratz.

He rolled down his window and moved his head, feeling the wind, feeling the tears which it brought to his eyes.

"BEN!"

Where, God damn him, is he running? Where does he think he can hide now, God damn me?

"BEN! BEN!"

He wanted to kill Baratz now. This minute, immediately. If he could get him right now, right now, he'd kill him quick.

"BEN!"

He could feel the small car begin to shake from the speed, the wheel trembling and jerking.

"BEN! BEN!"

He pressed down on the horn and he was weeping now from the wind. He didn't want to die and he had to die. He didn't

want to finish up here on this frozen road and in a frozen field.
"BEN!"

He moved his head into the car, his hands on the wheel, and he brushed his eyes dry. Jesus and Christ, but he didn't want to die now. Now, this hour, he had him now, and to die here with Baratz!

How had he come here to this road in St. Paul, six thousand miles from the *dorf* in Russia? What had brought him here? And he wanted God to help him now, but didn't figure on help. He had never planned this. My God, but he had not planned. He had just run, away from Russia, and away from police and border patrols and from any life, really, but what a golden life here in these last years.

What a life here for his wife and his sons, Jesus and Christ, but had he not found a life here? A liar with these people, a thief in their middle, and had he not lived good?

Had he not? All right, he'd go to the immigration people. No, too late now. Too goddamn late now. God damn me, but it's late now, all right.

He wanted to feel himself alive there in his small car, pinch his own cheek, or pull up his pants and watch his flesh, or unbutton his fly here, so he could know himself alive.

"BEN!"

Lev Simon got his head out the window again and now he could see Baratz bent over the wheel.

"BEN!"

Where is he running? What is he running now for? Ben. Where is he trying to go? He can't go anyplace.

Why doesn't he stop here, before we have an accident and are both killed in the cars?

Holding the wheel with one hand, he reached over and got the gun. He fumbled with the safety and pushed it free and got the gun in his left hand. He leaned far over into the wind and fired

once at the car, saw Baratz turning the wheel, and Lev Simon fired again, missing again.

"BEN! STOP! BEN!"

He was pleading with him now, saw Baratz turn his head, and then Lev jerked wide on the wheel, far to the right, and came around the other car. He swung even with Baratz, the left tires running on the fields. He saw Baratz's face and then pulled sharp to the right, came up against the other car's running board. Into the running board and into the left front fender, and heard the scraping and crashing and wanted to get his hands on Baratz.

Wanted to kick him now, and beat him, get his hands on Baratz's throat. He wanted to grind into Ben's car and turn it and drive over it. There was one last scraping, tearing sound of metal on metal, and Lev thought that now he must trade his car at last, and then he turned off the motor, came out of the automobile on his side, his foot clear of the running board, the gun in his left hand, watching Ben, who pushed frantically on the far door and then tumbled out, catching his foot, stumbling and running out into the fields.

Lev came around the front of the cars, turned his head once quickly to see the smashed fenders, and then he ran toward Ben. He saw Ben running, his legs stiff, saw the hat fall from his head.

"Ben! Ben, stop! Ben, damn me," he shouted, "people will see us. Ben, wait, damn me. Ben, people watch us!"

"Ben!" He pushed the gun into his jacket, moving after the short, fat, waddling-behind man.

"You, Ben, you *mauser*, you." He lost Ben Baratz for an instant as the other man went around and behind a sheaf of grain. He lost him and couldn't see him and then found him again. He saw Ben moving to the west across the field, thought of cars coming down the road; people would think they were crazy. People would see.

He felt his breath coming harder now. He had trouble breath-

ing, and then the wind took his cap and he felt the wind pulling at his hair.

He stumbled, caught his foot in a rut, and fell, arms forward and digging into the snow as he fell, moving for an instant on hands and knees, but going forward, and then he came upright again and he had lost Ben. He had lost him and then he saw Ben come out from behind a sheaf of grain and run low, his head low, and his arms moving wide.

Lev felt his shoe coming loose and then was out of the shoe, the snow cold on his stocking. He ran with one shoe, limping, the frozen ground cutting at his feet.

"BEN!"

He pulled at the gun then. Running, his eyes on Ben still, he got the gun out and, running, he fired into the air.

They heard me now for sure, Lev Simon thought. Now they know us, all right, they'll find us quick now, and, watching Ben, saw him turn. He came on at Baratz in a rush, saw Baratz standing before him, and then he was with Baratz, the two of them there in the field, and with his free hand, his right hand, he swung at Baratz, hitting him across the nose and watching the blood spurt.

Lev stood for an instant, his stocking ripped and his foot bleeding, Ben's eyes wide and crazy with fear, the sweat on Ben's forehead, the breath coming in great, rasping bursts, both of them trying to catch their breaths, their chests caved, and watching each other. Lev saw Ben's eyes, the tie out of the jacket and blown back over his shoulder by the wind.

"You're crazy, Lev," Baratz said. "What's the matter with you, Lev? For God's sake, *vos eez mit deer?*"

"Talk English, you sonofobitch. You're here in America, sonofobitch, talk English."

Both of them trying to get their breaths now.

"Lev."

"You, Ben, huh. You to *mauser*, huh, Ben? Nobody left in America to inform."

"Lev." He wiped the blood with his thumb.

"Lev," Simon said. "Shit, Lev."

"Lev, what are you doing? My God, Lev, what are you doing?"

"My boys."

"What? What boys?"

"Joe." He wanted to weep again.

"Lev," Simon said. "No more Lev for you," and he reached for the gun.

"Lev, you are crazy." Ben screamed then and moved his hands at Simon, reaching for the gun. Lev swung at the hands with the barrel of the gun, caught Baratz's right wrist and smashed the hands down.

"NO! LEV! NO!"

"Pack up again?" Lev asked.

Ben took a step backward and Lev followed.

"Please, Lev."

"Please, Lev, you *mauser*," feeling the wind against him.

"Lev, please."

He went back two steps and Lev went forward, limping on the leg.

"Oy, Lev."

"Move again? Move where again?"

The blood was dripping onto his chin. "No, Lev."

"Joe?"

"No, Lev."

"And Joe? Joe? Joe, Ben, you *mauser*, how's about Joe?"

Ben Baratz went back two steps; he was moving backward again, and his hands were raised on a level with his chest, the skin torn on the right wrist where the gun had struck, Lev followed him now, the gun low on his thigh, and Ben saw nobody. Oy, Gott, they were alone.

"Lev, for God's sake!"

"No. No God, Ben."

"For God's sake, Lev!"

"No God. Leave Him out. Leave God out."

"Lev."

"Lev," he said. "What, Lev?" he asked. "What?" following him, the stocking having rolled down now so that his heel was free and rubbing on the snow. "What, Ben?"

"You can't, Lev."

"Yes."

"No."

"Yes. Not no, Ben. Yes, and now," and felt himself down there. "Yes," he said, and saw Ben stumble, fall over backward. He watched Ben Baratz fall over backward and he was possessed by anger. He was filled with anger completely, taken over with rage. Ben Baratz turned a back somersault, his feet pushing into a sheaf of grain, toppling the sheaf, his legs atop it, and Lev reached down for him. He got Baratz by the jacket over the shoulders, felt the wind coming up his back as he bent, shivered once with the cold, and he pulled on Baratz. Ben had his arms free and he was pushing himself back with his hands, and then Lev knelt and gave Ben a tremendous whack with his left hand, the free hand. He whacked him once and again, hitting him with the inside of his fist, and then Ben lay loose. Lev reached for him, dropping the gun now, and pulled him up.

He had Ben by the jacket around the neck, and Ben held the biceps. He held him tight there. "Lev," he began to weep.

"Ruth," he wept, and Lev smashed him again with the right hand.

"Ruth," Ben said.

"You," and Lev wanted to choke him, felt the urge to choke him. He felt himself big and he wanted to pull Ben Baratz down. Pull him down and down and down, and kick him; get him on the ground once more and kick him. He smashed him again, full in the face, feeling the knuckles against Ben Baratz's nose, feeling

the bone go beneath the knuckles. Ben was loose in his arms and he slumped against Lev and slid down his jacket to the ground, Simon on top of him. Lev had him on the ground now. Ben twisted and lay a few feet away. Lev was on his hands and knees, feeling his feet bleeding, looking across at Ben.

"I didn't see nobody, Lev." He was crying, and his face was twisted so that he looked now like a child who has been whipped. "Lev, honest, I don't see nobody. I don't see nobody."

Simon was breathing hard, waiting for the breath to come easy. "You with God. What have you with God?"

"Sarah, Lev." Baratz's face was covered with blood.

Lev crawled across to him and he smashed his face again. "Leave Sarah. Leave Sarah. What are you with Sarah? What are you with my boys?"

"I don't talk, Lev. You know. Would I talk of this?"

Lev kicked at him. He was getting up and he kicked Baratz with his shoe and Ben rolled over. Lev kicked his back, struck him hard in the back, and Ben Baratz rolled over and over, the snow covering him completely, and then he pushed himself up and faced Lev.

"You are crazy," Baratz said.

Simon slapped him once more, felt the blood on his hand, and saw the blood covering his fingers.

"Come again for money, Ben?"

"Lev, please. Please, stop."

"Again, Ben?"

He saw Baratz before him, the blood coming onto the handkerchief Ben held under his nose, and then he saw Ben's eyes and turned to look with him at the boys coming across the field, Marty leading and the two others a step behind.

He saw the boys and thought of the gun and thanked God, owed God two now, once when he asked for Marty that night with the pneumonia, and now again with the revolver.

Saw them running and Baratz going past him toward the boys, saw Baratz hold Marty, slip to his knees as he held Marty, and then followed, the ground cutting at his foot.

Joe had Lev then and Hub had him and Marty kicked himself free of Baratz. "All right, Joe," Lev said.

Joe had his arms about his father and Lev said: "All right, Joe," and shook himself loose.

Hub reached out for his father, but Lev Simon pushed him away and Marty watched his father.

Lev stood before Baratz, his foot in the snow, and he didn't care about the cold now, nor about the torn flesh.

He saw Marty lunge at Ben Baratz but knocked him off balance and he said: "Not you, mister."

He pushed Marty away. "Not you," he said, wanting help from none of them, needing none of them.

"Ben," he said. He had trouble talking. "Ben," pointing his forefinger at him. "You, Ben.

"Long I live, Ben," he said, here in this field in Minnesota, finishing up now with all of them. No help from his kids, he wanted no help. Finish up now with the last policeman and the last border guard.

"You, Ben," and Baratz thought Lev Simon would strike him and cringed, but the other man dropped his arm.

He looked at Baratz and he was only annoyed with Baratz. He filled his mouth then and he leaned over and he spit full in Baratz's face.

"Long I live, Ben. Me 'n' my family. My house. Long I live, Ben, not for you," and then he spit at him again, spit in Baratz's face.

He turned and started across the field, walking unaided, the boys behind him. Hub found the shoe and the cap, but Lev Simon would not stop. He walked across the field in his bare foot, the wind in his hair and feeling good in his hair.

Hub came alongside him, showing Lev Simon the shoe, but his father pushed him aside and went across the field, feeling this America under him and in his hair; across the road and into the car.

He started his car, his bare foot on the gas pedal, tried to turn the automobile, but the fender was wedged into Baratz's, and then Lev Simon pulled hard on the wheel, tearing at the cars, and he was free.

He was in the middle of the road waiting for his sons, when Hub opened the far door and Joe the driver's door. They moved him away from the wheel, he sitting with his arms at his sides, and they wrapped the foot in Marty's shirt. Joe got the heater going and Hub came around to help Marty pull the fender free of the tire.

"Take the Ford, Hub," Marty said. "Follow us," he said.

Marty got in beside his father and Lev said: "Poor chickens. Ma waits for the chickens."

Marty had his arm around Lev and then Simon said, "Chickens," and dropped his head on Marty's shoulder.

His head was on Marty's shoulder and the boy's arms about him, cradling him, and holding him as Lev had held the boy in the market.

Marty smoothed the hair away from his father's forehead and then Lev Simon wept. He wept now, here on the road; once nineteen years back when the wagon had crossed into North Dakota, and now, here with his sons.

Marty held him and Joe had his hands on Lev's knee and the younger boy said: "Shah. Pa, shah. Shah, Pa, shah."

And Lev Simon sat upright, pushed himself free of Marty's arms. He ran his jacket sleeve over his eyes and asked for a cigarette.

"Drive to the rabbi, Joe. The chickens. Ma waits for the chickens."

That was a Tuesday, the day Lev Simon appeared in United States District Court. The notice said ten o'clock, Room 306. Joe had covered enough stories in the Federal Building to know it was the big room, Judge Peter J. Sullivan's court.

"White shirts today, please," said Lev Simon. He was in pajama pants before the mirror in the bathroom, one cheek puffed as he shaved, the door open, and talking to his image; not knowing which of his sons was in the room with him. "Ma got there on dining-room table white shirts for everybody."

"All right," Joe said. "White shirts. How long you going to hold that sink?"

Lev Simon turned to Joe, one cheek smooth, the other lathered. He grinned and some of the soap dripped onto his lips. "Special big day, kid. Must have special shave for this day."

"Joe, do me a favor." This from Hub in the shower he'd built over the tub. "Get me a towel, Joe."

Hy was in the kitchen, having wakened with his father, showered, and shaved, and now Marty appeared in the bathroom door, his pajamas crumpled, his face mottled as always from sleep. Lev saw him, and Joe, standing beside his father and brushing his teeth, saw him.

"Doctor," Lev said, grinning. "Thanks for waking, Doctor."

Marty sniffled and sat down on the laundry hamper. His feet were bare. "What time we have to be there?" he asked.

"Ten o'clock," Joe said. "You get the shower next."

"I don't know what you need me for," Marty said.

"Character reference," Joe said. "Pa is going to point at you and tell the judge: 'See, Judge, there is Martin Simon, apple of my eye. He'll vouch for me.'"

"Yeah," said Marty. His toes curled away from the cold tile.

Hub pulled the shower curtain apart and stood in the tub drying himself. "You'll make it a cinch for him, Marty," Hub said. "A saint like you. Why, the judge'll look at you and *know* the old man is kosher."

"Yeah."

"You're the——" Joe began.

"I don't know what you need me for," Marty said, "and I'm not going."

"You're going," Joe said.

"You make me," Marty said.

"You'll go," Hub said. "You're going, so shut up!"

Marty looked at Hub silently as Lev Simon held a huck towel under the hot-water faucet, wrung it out, and covered his face with it. He had the towel over his face and he looked at Marty.

He nodded at Marty. Then he removed the towel, nodding still. "'S right, Marty. These big fools who must go with their father. You sure not a fool like them. You stay home, kid."

"What do you need me for?" Marty complained. "Why do you need me?"

Lev was into his bathrobe now. "Don't need you," he said.

"Damn you," Hub said to Marty.

Marty sprang from the laundry basket, but Lev Simon was in front of him, put his hand to Marty's chest, and shoved him back onto the seat. "I don't need fights with you this day, mister. You say stay home. Stay home, please. But your fights I don't need today," and walked out of the bathroom.

Joe looked up from the sink. "Of all the days."

Marty rubbed his hands. He rose, turned his back to his brothers, and Joe said: "Mart. Stay away from him. He don't want apologies today."

Marty closed the door, unbuttoning his pajama top. "Why doesn't God cut out my tongue?" he asked. "How can I talk to him like that?" He flung the garment to the floor. "Why doesn't He strike me dumb before I talk to him like that?"

"Ah," Hub said. "Get your shower. Get dressed and drink some coffee."

"When he looks at me like that," Marty said, "I want to go into the ground."

Joe was using the electric razor. "Listen, it's not all yours, Mart," he said. "That's a trick of his, that look," Joe said, smiling, remembering one time or another when Lev Simon had stared at him. "He'll catch your eyes and it's like your best friend walks into his bedroom and you're in bed with his old lady."

Hub laughed. "He got it, all right."

"Shouldn't give him grief," Marty said.

"Grief," Hub said, stepping away from the tub. "Get in the shower with your grief, we'll be late."

Lev Simon, in white shirt and maroon silk unknotted tie, served his three oldest sons breakfast while Sarah dressed and Hy swept out the car.

"By golly, big day all right," Simon said.

"You're the one today," Joe said.

Lev poured himself a cup of coffee and stood beside the table, sipping the black liquid. Hub pulled a chair out. "Sit down, man," he said.

"Don't sit today," Lev said.

"You ought to call the store," Hub said. "See how things are."

"Care for the store today," Lev said. "I don't get rich from one day not in the store and I don't get poorer. He's all right there, Frank," said Lev, speaking of his clerk.

Sarah Simon came into the kitchen and Lev grinned as he saw her in the pea-green wool suit. He set the coffee cup on the table and he bowed. He went to his wife, put his arm about her, and turned with her to the boys.

"Say, how you like her, my queen?" he asked, grinning. "Am I a king with this queen or not? Truth, boys, *not* a king with this queen?"

Sarah Simon looked up at him. "You are a jerk," she said, and the boys were convulsed at the word. They leaned over the table, choking with laughter, and Lev Simon looked at his wife.

"Yes." She nodded. "Yes, you with your eyes. Don't give me your eyes today, Lev."

"A jerk?" he asked.

"A jerk," she said, and Marty squealed with laughter. "Citizen," said Sarah Simon, whose papers, with Joe's had come through at the last hearing a month earlier, who had now held the franchise for thirty days.

"Citizen," she said. "And if the judge says who is the first President?"

"First President," Lev said. "Mrs. Roosevelt," he said.

"Nu, who?" she asked.

"Who?" The boys were enchanted with the exchange between the two. "Mae West, who," he said. "Baby Ruth, who." Then reproachfully: "George Washington. What do you think, Sarah, I am a fool?"

"And who frees slaves?" she asked.

He nodded. "Lincoln," pronouncing both *l*'s as he always did.

She smiled now. Sarah Simon had gone to the Y.W.C.A. three nights a week for two years, been graduated from the International Institute which held citizenship classes. She had carried her certificate with her to court as required in St. Paul, had presented it to the clerk of court as required. She had watched Judge Sullivan examining her graduation certificate, had glowed

under his smile at her, for without the diploma no one was granted final papers in St. Paul.

Lev Simon had not gone to school.

"Lincoln," she said, aping him. "Tell me, please, what amendment is income taxes?"

"What?" he asked.

"The number, please," she said. "What amendment?"

"Ah . . ." He waved his hand at her. "Number!" he said. "Number, shmumber. I pay. *Fartig*, finished, this examination, missus."

"You——" she said.

"*Fartig*." To the boys: "Dress ap, kids, and hurry."

She followed him into the bedroom, watched him knotting his tie, waited while he got into his suit coat. Then: "If he asks you questions, Lev?"

Thus it had gone for two years, from the time they had all three received first papers and Sarah had enrolled in the Institute, going from one bedroom to the other in the evening as the boys studied and asking them to examine her. She had sat in the kitchen for two years, a scratch pad before her, spelling and writing and memorizing aloud.

Lev Simon would not attend. It seemed absurd to him that a man in his fifties should attend school. He read the Yiddish papers. He listened to the radio, heard commentators from six in the morning until the ten o'clock evening newscast. He was forever arguing with his sons, talking politics, asking questions. He would not go to school, he said, and he didn't.

"Sarah, too late now," he said. He took her arm and smiled down at her. "*Tairs*," he said. "Come with me, *tairs*, your husband finds a new home today."

The flight had ended there in the wheat field two years earlier. He had finished with Ben Baratz that day, and then Marty and Hub and Hy had pinned Lev Simon down, held him from

squirming, overrode Joe's attempts to side with their father.

A week after the incident in the fields Marty had gone to the post office building there on Kellogg Boulevard, sauntered into the Immigration Department, and asked a few questions for the paper he was preparing in his political science class at the university.

He was writing this paper on immigration, Marty told them, and how about illegal entry? How about deportation? How about that?

He had taken a taxi to the store. He wouldn't telephone; he wanted to see Lev Simon when he told his father. Hub was in the store then, and the three of them went back into the office. Marty let him sit down, let Lev cross his legs, and then he said:

"We screwed away seven years. You could have been a citizen now since 1934."

"What?"

"You got here before '23, right?" Lev nodded. "No crimes, right?" Lev nodded. "You know how you got in, over the border from Canada, right?"

Marty spread his arms. "Just say where and how you got in and you apply for papers." He nodded. "They passed a law. Back in '34." He leaned over. "Nineteen thirty-four," he said. "Seven years, you and that smart Joe."

Lev Simon moved the pencil over the old copy of *Life*. Wouldn't look at his son. "Don't believe," he said.

Marty dropped the printed copy of the law on the desk, over Lev Simon's hand. "Don't believe that," Marty said. "Tell me you don't believe that," he challenged.

They heard the door opening beyond them, and Hub left the office to go up front.

Lev Simon didn't move his hand. "Can't believe," he whispered. He felt an ache in his chest and felt his lips parched. He was very tired here in the chair.

Marty squatted before him, taking Lev's hand in his, balancing himself by holding Lev's knee. "Pa," he said.

"Can't believe, Mart."

"Sure."

"Don't know, Mart. You born here, you don't know."

"Pa." Marty moved forward on the balls of his feet. The office was cluttered and dirty, dank and dark, and Lev Simon was cold in the tiny enclosure. Marty held Lev's hand and waited until his father looked at him, and he nodded at his father.

"Pa. I know. I'm a hothead and I give you trouble. I don't think and I don't feel and I want to fight," he said. "I want to punch and push and kick, but you're my pa. I know how you feel, Pa," he said. "You think I don't know? I know. I know you and what you are, and how you had to hide and run, and I don't blame you. You think I blame you? You think I'd have done different? You think I wouldn't have paid off Ben Baratz? You think I would have taken chances?"

"Citizen," Lev Simon said.

"You will be." Marty rose and helped his father from the chair. "You'll be a citizen."

"Me," Lev Simon said to himself, for Marty wasn't there now, he'd left Marty some time ago.

"You."

"Must tell Ma," Lev Simon said.

Marty grinned. "Go home and tell her, Pa. Go on, the car's here. Go home and tell her."

"Yes," Lev Simon said, and began to untie the knot of his apron string, but Marty pushed his father's hands away and undid the knot. He lifted the apron over his father's head and got Lev's jacket. He held Lev's cap for him there in the back room and then he stood on tiptoe and moved his father's head so he could kiss his cheek.

He followed Lev Simon into the store proper and watched him

go out. Hub was standing at the cashier's cage and he watched Lev Simon.

Marty watched Lev and he shook his head. He saw Lev go out the door, turn to the left toward the car, and he shook his head. "He just tears me apart," Marty said. "Sometimes I look at him and he tears me open."

"Just you," Hub said. "You're the only one, aren't you?" he asked.

So now on this morning they drove down Summit Avenue, which had been settled by the New Englanders seventy-five years earlier, which had been an old, gracious street when Lev Simon got off the train at the depot with Sarah and with Joe.

Hy drove and Sarah sat between him and Marty, Lev at the window behind his redheaded son, Hub in the middle with Joe flanking him.

Joe had taken the day off, trading with another reporter, and the three boys had stayed out of classes. Lev had wanted them all there, insisting on it, and they were silent as they came down Summit Avenue, as though they were all strangers, passengers in an airport limousine. Hy passed the cathedral and turned down onto Sixth Street, driving into the loop. He found space in the parking lot there behind the North Star Hotel, a block from the Federal Building, and Joe paid the attendant.

Hub took his mother's arm and Hy took his mother's arm and the other two walked with Lev. They came into the building, moving through the lawyers and stenographers sipping cokes and the Army and Marine recruiting sergeants in their dress uniforms. They were silent going into the elevator, and there on the third floor they saw Abe Schmukler waiting for them.

Abe took off his hat for Sarah Simon, shaking her hand, and he slapped Lev's back. He jabbed Marty, crouching as though they were in the boxing ring, and rubbed Hy's head. "The whole gang, huh, Lev?" he asked.

"Why not?"

"It's almost filled in there," Abe said. "We better get inside," he said, pointing at the courtroom. "You got your other witness?"

"Should be," Lev said.

"I told you to call him, Pa," Hub complained.

"Don't worry, please," Lev said, on edge now. He could feel the leg shivering again and wanted this done with quickly. "Please, Hub, quiet now, yes?" he asked. Then: "There . . ." He stepped away from them. "There he is," he said, and walked to the radiator, smiling at Carl Rosenstiel.

He grinned at the man and held out his hand, taking off his hat for Carl Rosenstiel. "Sure nice you come," he said to the department-store owner; to the Phillips Exeter and Harvard and Wharton School of Business alumnus; to the past president of the St. Paul Athletic Club; to one of the three Jewish members of the Minnesota Club; to the Shriner and the veteran of the Rainbow Division and always-chairman of the Red Cross drive. "Sure nice," Lev Simon said.

"My pleasure," said Rosenstiel. "You and I, Mr. Simon. It's been a long time."

"Long time, for sure," said Lev Simon, who had paid for the lamp as he had pledged he would, whose charge account had been active from that day; for whom there was no other store in St. Paul, not for dishes or rugs or Sarah's fur coat or frames for the boys' diplomas.

Rosenstiel nodded his head toward the elevator. "Your family?" he asked.

"Yes. All mine," said Lev Simon, and led him to the group, introduced Rosenstiel to his wife and to his sons.

They stood for a moment and then Rosenstiel took Sarah's arm and they moved into the court, finding a half-empty pew three rows back in the center of the room.

Rosenstiel stood aside for Sarah Simon, who had always favored a courtly man, and then he waited for Lev to pass him. They sat thus: Sarah, Lev, Joe, Hub, Marty, Hy, Abe Schmukler, and Rosenstiel on the aisle, and they waited while twelve men and women were called before the clerk said: "Eliav Simon."

Lev heard the clerk call his name twice, and then while his sons and his wife and his two witnesses turned to him he rose. He turned in the pew and set his hat and coat on the seat and then pushed through to stand before Judge Sullivan.

He could not now begin to like authority, begin to feel comfortable before the robes of law and the uniform and badge of the court clerk. He stood before the bench while Judge Sullivan looked through the file, his hand on his cheek and his lips pursed.

One thing, Lev thought: They don't send me back. The law is not to send back, he thought.

The judge was a long time with the file, and at last he set the folder on the bench. He had seen Carl Rosenstiel's name as witness and now he searched the courtroom until he found the man and smiled a hello at him beside Abe Schmukler in the pew.

Nu, Lev Simon thought, and then the judge clasped his hands and he said: "Mr. Simon, your papers are in order and satisfactory."

"Yes."

"I find no cause for dissatisfaction with your application."

Nu. Nu?

"However, sir, I remember examining your wife in this court some weeks ago. She had the required Institute certificate. I do not find this certificate in your application. Has it been misplaced?"

He could not hold the leg still now.

"Has it been misplaced, Mr. Simon?" Then: "I mean to say, did you lose the certificate?"

All those people behind me, Lev thought.

I could be all right without *those* people.

"Mr. Simon?" The judge was leaning forward now.

"You mean the school there in Y, yes, Judge?"

"Yes. The school."

"I tell you, Judge." See, the leg stops now, all right. "From the school I tell you. I'm pretty hard-working man. Have a store, you know. Summer work from four o'clock till dark. Winter, maybe five o'clock. Comes suppertime, I'm pretty tired guy, all right. After supper, sleep an hour, maybe two. I'm fifty years next month, Judge, and maybe I'm little too old for this school. Maybe I'm little too tired for school, Judge."

There were only two people in the court now for Lev Simon.

"I tell you, Judge. Is this way, I got pretty good school there in my house on Ashland Avenue. Got four boys, and I send them to school. And if they go to school, then old man must be there in his store twelve, fourteen hours a day.

"I tell you, Judge, I figure ap maybe I don't need this school. I figure ap with myself, Lev Simon, you have these four boys, and you send them to college. You are greenhorn here in this America, here few years and you know from tuition, and you know from books, slide rules, physics, all that kinda stuff, and maybe you had your share school, I figure.

"Four, Judge," and he held up his fingers, concealing the thumb on his right hand. "Four, I got, and I figure ap, I'll 'splain to judge. Didn't have much time, Judge, for school, with four boys; you know how this is, you are a family man, yes?"

The judge nodded. He looked at the pew where they sat with Carl Rosensteil. "Are those your boys?"

Lev Simon turned from the judge to look at his family, saw the filled court, and the leg began to twitch again.

The judge looked again at the application and then Lev Simon was back with all the border guards. He could feel his leg twitching, could feel his hands moist, rubbed them on his trousers, but

they remained moist, and he watched the judge. He could say nothing more to this judge, there was no amount of rubles to take care of this judge, and then Carl Rosenstiel was beside him.

He smiled at Lev, his hand on Simon's arm, and he said: "If Your Honor will forgive me," to the judge with whom he played poker in the Minnesota Club, for whom he had gone to Senator Moorehead eleven years ago when Peter J. Sullivan was senior state district judge and might have been passed by for the Federal bench.

Carl Rosenstiel told the judge about the lamp then, speaking only to the judge, so that the court reporter had to lean forward over his stenotype to catch the words. He told the judge of the lamp, of the horse and wagon, of the truck, of the store, and as he spoke the black-robed man looked from Lev Simon to his sons and once more to their father.

Then he leaned over and whispered to Carl Rosenstiel, who walked to the pew, gestured to Sarah Simon, and escorted her to the bench.

Carl Rosenstiel put her at Lev Simon's right and he stepped away from the bench, leaning against the rail beside the court stenographer.

Whatever he wants, Joe said to himself of Carl Rosenstiel. If he asks for my arm now, it's his, he thought. If that judge wants me to stop a train by lying on the tracks, he thought.

Judge Sullivan was very solemn. He straightened his black robes and rose from the worn black leather chair which Frank B. Kellogg had given him and, standing high up above Lev and Sarah Simon, swore him in as a citizen of the United States.

He swore him in and then sat down, reaching for the next application.

Lev Simon turned to Sarah as a man turns to his bride, and he took her hands. They were standing before the filled court, he holding her hands, she watching him, only him, smiling at him,

but her eyes filling, the tears dropping over onto her cheeks, running in parallel lines to her chin.

He held her hands and he nodded at her. "Nu," he said, and he smiled.

"Nu, Sarah," he said, feeling her chapped hands, his thumbs running over her skin.

• "Nu," he said to Sarah, who had started with him in the *dorf* halfway around the world.

Damn it, I'm getting out of here," Marty said. He came up out of the couch, pushing the footstool so that it rested, finally, legs up. He had his hands in his pockets, tugging up on his trousers, his lips together, and breathing through his nose.

The fighter, Joe thought. Running through his life with the fuse always lit.

Hub heard Marty breathing, sitting there on the other end of the couch, and he set the paper in his lap, uncrossing and recrossing the ankles where they rested on the coffee table, looking up at his brother. Hy heard him and turned from the window, sitting down on the piano stool to face Marty and Hub.

"I'll go nuts if I spend another night home," Marty said.

"Sit down," Joe said.

From Hy: "Mart, please."

"Sit down," Joe said.

"Mart," Hy pleaded.

"No," Marty said. "I'm going downtown."

"No," Joe said.

Hy stood up, looking from one to the other. "Joe," he said. "Oh, Marty."

"No," Joe repeated. Take it easy, he told himself. You're the oldest.

"Yes." Marty looked from Hub to Joe to Hy. He looked at Joe once more. "Give me the car keys," he said.

"No. Sit down, Mart."

"Give me the Ford keys, then. Give me them."

"No, Marty."

He had one hand out, palm up. "Give me the keys, Joe. They're not your cars, remember that. It's the old man's dough."

"I know how tough you are," Joe said. "Don't show me how tough you are, Champ," Joe said. "Doc. Take it easy, Doc."

"Joe," he warned.

"You're nervous," Joe said. "Go to a shower. Play some records. Soft, though, the old man's asleep finally. Go read a book."

The other hand came out of his pocket and Joe saw the left shoe move an inch, and another, and another, and then the day told on Joe and he sprang from the chair. "I'll slap your face, kid," Joe said. "I'm no prof that you're going to get tough with." He knew he shouldn't talk thus, he was the oldest.

Pointing his finger at Marty: "I'll slap your face."

Then Hy was between them, holding Marty's arms and smiling.

"I say he licks you, Mart," Hy said, smiling. "He'll fix your clock, Mart," Hy said, not believing it at all, "but he's too old. He'll need a week in bed, Mart." Hy winked at Joe, his hands holding Marty.

"Take it easy, Mart," he asked. "Ma's finally lying down. She's bushed. What do you want to do, fellow, wake her? Wake Ma?

Please, Mart, will you?" Hy asked, pushing the redhead back toward the couch, talking sweet talk to him, rubbing his arms, offering an out for Marty. He got Marty settled and then dropped to the floor, sitting cross-legged before the couch, his head back against his brother's knee.

He moved an arm to clutch Hub's ankle, caressing the leg with his fingers, and in his bedroom Lev Simon heard them all talking and looked up at his wife, who sat beside him in a robe. "Sarah, please," he said.

"Lev, no more *tsures*, trouble. Lay a few more days, Lev."

"My boys come to see me. To *my* house and I'm here and they are there," he said.

"There'll be another time," she said.

He watched her. Ai-yai, another time. "For an hour," he said.

"Lev."

He turned his head then, so he saw the windows on the other side of the bed, saw the light outside. "My house," he said.

She rose and looked down at him.

"My boys in my house," he said, and his hands moved on the covers.

"Only your boys, Lev," she said.

"In my house."

"Only your boys," she said, tired now from the long day. "Promise me, Lev."

"Must stay here like a prisoner and *my* boys there."

"Lev, promise me so I can go to sleep."

He wouldn't look at her. "Promise," he said. "Promise. Promise. Promise."

She bent to kiss his forehead and then left the room. He lay in his bed, the door of the room open, the light from the living room dull around the foot of the bed. He lay in the dark, his hands together on the covers and his feet together, his body quite still, listening to them.

Hy was laughing, the boys watching him and smiling at him, nobody knowing the joke but Hy. Lev raised his head. "Hub called Helen today, reversed the charges."

They were all laughing now, even Hub. "Not more than three minutes," Marty said. "I'll lay dough, not more than three."

Hy had begun to cough from the laughter. Finally: "All he said was 'Helen, I haven't got time. I'm fine, take care of the baby,' he said. 'Hang up, Helen, take care of the baby, I love you, God damn it.' That's all he said."

Marty's face was red. He slid to the floor, coughing, too, now. Hub was laughing, his elbows on his knees and his head bent, shaking his head as always as he laughed.

Joe watched them all. He had seen Hub last three years before, and then for twenty minutes in the Union Depot at Kansas City, the brothers in uniform and Helen white with fatigue.

He watched them there across the room and he thought: This is the last time now. We're a family tonight, but this is the last time. Your childhood is gone, *boychik*, he told himself; there'll be no more of this. Get down on your knees and crawl over to Hy. Hold this night with you. Wrap this night up, get close to them. Listen to them and laugh with them, *boychik*, this is the end of your family.

The laughter stopped, Joe sitting in his father's chair, unconsciously picking at the enamel on the lamp beside him as Lev Simon had. Of a sudden they were all silent and sober, each with Lev Simon now, each at a different time in the past when he had gone to his father for *something*: for money, assurance, advice, the need to be heard, for the warm hand on the shoulder and the fingers brushing the hair from the forehead and, more than anything, the thing he gave each of them always: his warm, brown, trusting eyes, so that they knew he was with them.

"Mart, is it just rest?" Hub asked. "Nothing but rest?"

Marty spread his hands, sitting on the floor with Hy, whisper-

ing so that Lev Simon could not hear. "Three coronaries. The percentages are bad enough on the first. I never expected him to beat the second." He held up one fist, hit the thumb and forefinger with the other hand. "Like a hammer. Each one like a hammer beating at him, tearing the heart to pieces."

"Ai-yai," Hub said, and put his face in his hands. "Ai-yai," he said as he looked up at Joe, his fingers coming down his cheeks. He nodded at Joe.

"Maybe we could get him to me," Hub said. "The sun."

Hy shook his head. "He won't leave the house while he's sick. You know how he feels about his house."

"I'll give anybody in this room a rook," Hub said, standing up and walking about the room. "A rook, you hear."

Nobody answered.

"Come on for a walk, Joe," Hy said. "When we get back we'll let them go."

Joe shook his head, his fingers endlessly at the lamp.

"He's slipped," Hub said. "Ai-yai, but he's slipped."

"Yes," Joe said. "He's slipped."

"Let's shoot some pool," Marty offered.

"No pool," Joe said.

Marty slapped the couch arm hard, nodding. He spoke loudly, and this Lev Simon heard in the darkness: "Some poker, then, how about that?"

"Poker," Joe agreed. He had five dollars left, having drawn on his salary the week before, leaving New York in a rush, unable to make a touch in the few hours before the plane left.

"Poker," Joe agreed.

"Not me," Hub said.

Joe rose from the chair. "That's a deal. Hy, get the mats for the dining-room table."

"I'm going to sleep," Hub said, but Marty had come up behind him, had him pinned now, his face at Hub's ear.

"Poker," Marty said, and he tightened the hold, grinning at Joe. "You'll play, Hub," he said.

Hy turned at the closet door in the hall. "Come on, Hub. Penny ante. How can you lose?"

Joe slapped his hands. "Nickel limit," he announced. "Come on," he said, reaching into his pocket, feeling the five. "Marty, you need some air, you said. Drive over to the Grand and get a bottle from Nate Berg. Tell him it's for me," Joe said, the three of them standing there in a group. "I'll pay him tomorrow," Joe said. "Get some good stuff."

"In this house I buy visky," Lev Simon said.

He was standing against the arch which separated the living room from the dining room, wearing a maroon wool robe that had a phony line of bright, many-colored silk rectangles stitched below the handkerchief pocket. The robe was tight around him, pulled over the white silk pajamas he loved. The pajama collar was buttoned, turned up around his neck, the lapels awry, and in the robe and white silk, the color high on each cheek, Lev Simon was very handsome.

"I buy visky," he repeated.

Hub said, "Pa!" and started toward his father, but Marty and Joe blocked him, the two watching Lev Simon and smiling at him.

"You shouldn't be out of bed," Hub said.

Lev smiled, his hands pushed into the robe pockets. "I shouldn't be in bed, kid. I behave," he promised. "Just a few minutes with my boys," he said. "Dark there, boys," he said.

"Sure, Pa," Marty said, and Hy came out of the hall, carrying the mats. "Hi, Pa," he said, smiling, and Lev grinned and shook his head once, marveling at his youngest.

"Poker," Lev said. "Come on, I play, too, a little while. Me and my four sons." He reached for Joe's arm. "Me and my writer, newspaper fellow, big shot in New York. Knows Joe Louis, my son."

His hand moved to Joe's shoulder, rumbled Joe's hair then, rubbed his head, and Joe thought: Why not? What harm now? he thought. Why not, if he wants to?

"How you, Joe?" Lev asked. "All right?"

"Better than that."

Lev Simon pushed Joe's head and grinned. "Got money?"

"I'm loaded."

Lev raised his eyebrows. "So? Loaded is good." He rubbed his hands. "All right, boys. I got two dollars to lose."

"Nickel limit," Joe said.

"Nickel? Hear, boys, that big shot. Nickel, he says. I can't afford nickels, Joe."

"Well, I'm not playing pennies."

Lev was at the head of the table, reaching for the chair, but Hub had beat him, was pushing it forward now. "All right, nickels," Lev said. "Hy, bring, please, my chips."

"I'll bank," Joe said, figuring he wouldn't have to show money.

Lev shook his head, smiling still. "I bank," he said. He rapped his knuckles on the green felt mat. "Bank thirty-two years in my house, Joe. Too late for changes now." He put his hands around the chip drum.

Joe sat at his right, Hub at his left. Marty was next to Hub, and Hy sat at the far end across from Lev Simon.

"Nickel a chip," said Lev Simon, beginning to count, and then suddenly he began coughing, the chips sliding out of his hand onto the green felt, his fingers spreading on the mat, the other hand holding the arm rest. Marty was in and out of the kitchen before Joe could move, and Hy was behind Lev, his arm about his father's shoulders, supporting him, waiting for the coughing to stop, while Marty held the glass of water ready.

When Lev had drunk, Marty set the glass down, his fingers on Simon's wrist, looking into the man's eyes. Lev Simon winked at Marty. He turned and winked at Joe. He moved his hand,

reaching behind him to touch Hy. "Two doctors, Joe," he said. "See, Hub, *two* doctors. Not so bad for greenhorn, had horse and wagon twenty-seven years ago, can't write Aingilsh today." Hy returned from Lev's bedroom with a pillow, moving him forward in the chair until he could slide it lengthwise behind him.

Lev had gathered the chips on the table. "All right," he said. "Poker. Come on. Money on the table or no chips. Money on the table, boys."

Hy opened a card table beside his chair, set scotch, ice, glasses, and soda on it. He made drinks for everyone but Lev, who asked for the bottle and a jigger. They watched him fill the small glass, hold it to his lips, letting his tongue feel the liquor, then taking it in one deep swallow.

Why not? Joe thought. How many jiggers left to him, and how many nights like this?

Lev reached for the bottle again, but Hy had it now and was shaking his head, smiling at his father, his head moving no. "That's all, Dad," he said.

"Give the bottle, Hy." Lev had to grin with his son.

Hy moved to his chair, setting the bottle on the card table beside him. "You know that's all, Dad," he said. "That's all you get. Be a good dad now and deal them."

"Yeah." Marty rapped on the mat while Hub ruffled his chips. "Deal them," Marty said. "Action," he insisted.

"All right." Lev held the pack. "All right, seven cards."

"Two-raise limit," Hub said.

"No limit," Marty said.

"Right," Joe agreed. "Not on raises. Guts to raise."

Lev looked at Joe, his eyelids half closed. "You got guts, Joe?" he asked; then, answering himself: "Yes, guts you got." He dealt Hub a card, face down. "Three raises," he decided. "That finishes argument. Play cards, please."

Hub took the first pot with a small straight to the nine. He'd

sat, calling Marty's pair of fives showing, watched Joe raise once on a four flush, just calling, although he had his straight then. He took the second pot, dealing himself a winner, and Marty called draw poker on his deal, jacks or better. Joe picked up the queens, opened for the nickel, and discarded three cards. Lev stayed, Hub dropped, Marty stayed, and Hy dropped.

Joe picked up three worthless cards and opened loudly, tapping the chip against the others in the pot. Lev looked carefully at his cards and raised. Marty raised him. Joe called against his better judgment. Lev raised once more.

"Raises over," Hub announced.

"You're not in this pot," Marty said. "Who's asking you for decisions, smart guy? I'm raising," he said.

Lev spread an ace-king flush on the green. "Raises over," he said. "Somebody beats me?" he asked as he reached for the chips.

Marty dropped his cards before Hy, his face red once more. "Just tell smart guy to keep his mouth shut," he said.

Lev Simon turned to Marty as the phone rang. Hy ran for it, getting to the instrument before it could sound again and perhaps wake his mother. Lev pulled in his chips and they all sat waiting, all turned to the phone. Hy spoke low, then put his hand over the mouthpiece and pointed at Marty. The champ shook his head. Hy gestured with his arm, waving frantic come-ons, but Marty turned away. Hy spoke again, softly, then replaced the receiver.

He got back to the table, reached for the cards, and began shuffling them as Lev Simon finished stacking his chips into the drum at his side. "It was Lois," Hy said. "I told her you were sleeping. She was worried, said you were supposed to call her, Mart."

"I don't have to call anybody," Marty announced. "I'll call her tomorrow."

"One day, no tomorrow," Lev murmured.

"Play five-card stud," Hy announced.

"I know what I'm doing," Marty said.

"You can't know when you don't think," Lev said. "Why don't you call Loo-is tonight?"

"Am I going to get it from you too?"

"You don't get nothing from me, kid," Lev said. "Remember, I'm not a rich man. I don't leave you nothing. I just *tell* you one thing: one day, no tomorrows. Not for Loo-is, not for brothers, not for friends. I tell you something, Mr. Champeen, one day you lose the fight. I tell you something, Mr. Boxer, you're tough so long as somebody fights with you. One day nobody fights with you, nobody talks with you, nobody *looks* to you. You'll be a doctor? Keep ap like this now, how you are tonight, you be a doctor for gangsters."

Hy was dealing, and as Lev Simon spoke he put one card beneath the other, his hands busy. He looked at his hole card and he said: "Too tired for talking much tonight, Marty. *You* too old. What I tell you, remember, kid, because nobody cares for you again like I care."

He bent far over the table and turned Marty's face-up card down, pushing the two pasteboards together. "Deal him out, Hy," he said. "Open, Joe," he said, tossing a chip into the pot, and he jerked his thumb at the phone and looked at Marty.

"Call her, kid," he said gently, nodding as he spoke. "For me, do a favor for the old man, call her." Marty pushed his chair away from the table. "Tell her truth, Marty, do a special favor for me. I 'preciate if you do this favor. Taste once in your life, kid, how it feels to apologize. Won't make you sick, I promise."

Joe had kings backed up and raised them through the next two cards, forcing the betting. Lev stayed on with what looked like nothing, grinning as he bet. Hy dropped and dealt Joe a jack, Lev an ace, Hub a ten. Joe bet. "Your king's dead," Lev said, and raised. Hub dropped out then.

Joe raised immediately, knowing then he'd been beaten by

aces. Lev raised, but Joe, cursing himself, called. Lev turned up the hole ace. "I need chips," Joe said.

"Money."

"Here." Joe flung his last three dollars at Lev. "Don't you trust me?"

Lev Simon cocked his head. "Me, Joe?"

The remorse had set in now, and Joe had every name known to call himself. He should have gotten a hundred somewhere. Somewhere! Always he determined to be careful, to budget, and always he would sit in on a week-end poker game, or fly to Vermont for skiing, or Bermuda for three days, and then three months to pay back what he borrowed.

Joe was angry with himself because the boys were laughing at what Lev Simon had said, Marty sliding into his chair and laughing, and Joe tried to be angry with his father and couldn't. Could not be angry as he could never fool Lev, really.

"Deal, Joe," Lev Simon said.

In the next half-hour, playing wild, betting on every card, raising when he had no right to raise, Joe went to his last dollar. Hub and Lev were winners, Hy was even, Marty was losing almost as much as Joe.

Hub had most of the chips, and Marty bought two dollars' worth from him. Hub folded the money, stuffed it into his shirt pocket, and giggled. He was dealing draw poker.

"Enjoy, huh?" Lev asked.

"Huh?"

"Feels good, the money?" Lev asked. "Feels better, maybe, than your baby's hand, the money? Feels better than Helen's cheek, the money?"

Marty and Hy passed and Joe opened with a pair of jacks. Lev bet, Marty bet, Hub dropped out, his hands holding the pack ready to deal for discards. Lev asked for two cards, looking at Hub. "Since you a kid," he said, "with that money. Married man,

now, got a baby, and I don't see you change a penny's worth. *Halfpenny's* worth. What do you think, Hub, you safer because the dollar is there in your pocket? Think another dollar makes you smarter, maybe? You think makes you healthy, your dollars there hiding in pocket?"

Joe bet his jacks and Lev Simon called. Marty and Hy dropped, and Lev won with queens. He reached for the chips and then suddenly, moving his hands away from him, pushed the chips hard toward Hub. "There, take," he said. "I don't live longer with eighty cents and you be happier. Take, Hub. Money. Take." And he leaned back in his chair, breathing heavily.

Hub stacked the chips, picked them up, and carried them to his father. He leaned over Lev Simon, shaking his head to get the hair out of his eyes. "I'm not cheap, Pa," he said quietly.

Lev Simon nodded, his head back against the pillow and his eyes closed. "You cheap, Hub," he said. "You real, good cheap. Better stop, kid; that's a sickness, that money. Joe got sickness, he spends too much; you got sickness the other way. All right, Hub." He pointed at the chair. "Go, play cards."

He leaned over the table, his hands together and his fingertips touching. "Not worth, Hub," he added. "Save, yes, the best policy; but cheap. Cheap!" He waved a forefinger at Hub. "I never told you wrong, kid, remember. When you want to quit college, I say stay, and when you want to stay here, I say go to Los Angeles. Yes"—he nodded—"honest and true, I want you here. But in my house you are a baby, and in Los Angeles you must be a man. Now I say no good, this cheap. Deal, Hy."

Joe couldn't get cards. He played carefully, dropping out of pot after pot until he came into a seven-card game with the first three aces, two in the hole, but after another card everybody dropped. He won fifty cents.

Hy opened the window in the living room to get the smoke out, and Lev Simon put an unlighted cigarette in his mouth. He began

coughing again and Hy helped him, holding him, while Marty watched his father carefully, no anger now, no flushed face, the eyes coldly professional. The boys watched while Hy held him, smiling at him, talking sweet to him.

Lev Simon pulled himself free. "Stop with the honey," he said. "Stop now, Hy, enough honey for one night. You a good boy, Hy," he said. "Maybe best from all these bums here. Nice boy, gentleman for sure, but I tell you"—he raised the forefinger—"I tell you, too much smile is no good, Hy. Who are you, minister, should like everybody? Who are you, the mayor, should smile for everybody? People get sick so much smiling, kid, cause they don't think you mean. Be honest, little bit, don't hurt if you mad once a month. Don't hurt to feel fight once a month. What you think, mister, all womans like you should hold their hands when you're doctor? No"—he shook his head—"all womans don't like. All men don't like; look me, I'm tired tonight from your honey and from your sweet."

"Are we playing poker?" Joe asked.

"Come on," Marty urged, "I want to get even. Deal 'em, Joe." They played for another fifteen minutes, but neither Marty nor Joe would get even this night. Marty won a fairly good pot, and when Joe had fifty cents in chips left, he suggested quitting. Hy was dealing then.

"I deal last," Lev Simon said. "I start, I findish. All right?"

Joe dropped out of the stud game Hy dealt. With his deal he called five-card stud, dealt himself a three in the hole, a seven showing, and dropped. Lev Simon won the pot with a pair of tens.

He shuffled the deck for a long time. "Last hand," he said. "Boys," he said, "last time." Joe looked at the felt. "Joe," said Lev, "last time," and winked at his oldest son.

"Stud," Lev said. "Play Hy's game. Stud." Joe got the queen of clubs and paired it immediately with the diamond lady showing. "Well," he said. "Come on now, gamblers, get on this one."

They all stayed, even Hub with a six up. Lev dealt them around. Hub paired the six, Marty looked dead, Hy had an ace, Joe the deuce of diamonds, Lev dealt himself a jack.

"Flush," Joe announced. "Bet into me, Hub."

"I'll bet into you," Hub said. "I'll bet your head off." Marty folded, Hy called, Joe raised. Lev called, and Hub and Hy followed.

"I raise," Joe said. Lev called, Hub raised, sticking out his tongue at his father as he dropped the chips. "I'm a nickel light," Joe said.

On the next round Hub had nothing, Joe caught another diamond, and Lev Simon paired the jacks. "I check," Lev said. Hub nodded.

"I'll bet," Joe said. "Dime light," and he had three chips stacked away from the pot.

Joe had the ace of diamonds for his last card. Hub had not progressed. Lev had the jacks showing.

"Bet your jacks," Joe said.

"Sure I'll bet," Lev said. "You got no flush."

Hub studied the table. "Pass," he said. Then, to his father: "I'm not cheap."

"No," Lev said. He shook his head. "I know you not cheap, Hub."

"I raise," Joe said. "I'm a quarter light."

Lev threw his chips in, covering the bet. "Why don't you buy chips?" he asked quietly.

"Do I have to buy them right now? This is my pot!"

"My pot," Lev Simon said. "You bluff."

"I'm not bluffing."

Lev was counting chips out of the drum. "Here," he said. He shoved twenty chips across the green. "Give me a dollar."

"Can't you wait? I've got you beat."

"You bluff, Joe." He reached out and turned up the black

queen. "See, you bluff. I got three jacks, all right." He displayed the third. "I beat you, all right, because I *know* you bluff. You have no flush and you have no money. I know," he said. "If I know, then other people know." He pushed himself up in his chair. "Boss knows you bluff, Joe, friends know. Can't bluff all your life, Joe, remember. Time to stop bluffing."

"All right."

"You tell me all right since you a kid," Lev said. "You got money to fly to New York?" he asked. "No, not a dime." He reached into the robe pocket and came out with a roll of bills. "Here," he said, "here is a hundred dollars," and he counted it out. "This time you pay back, Joe." He pushed the chair back from him and held onto the table. "You pay back," he said, "no more bluff."

He sat down once more and cashed in the chips. Hy made another round of drinks, and they took them into the living room, standing there around the coffee table, waiting for Lev Simon. He was sweating a little and he wiped his forehead with the back of his hand. "Whew, I'm tired," he said.

"Sit down for a while," Hub said.

He stepped back and shook his head. "Going to the bed," he said, smiling slowly. "Tired." The boys stood in a half circle around him. "Good game." He nodded.

He pointed at Joe's glass. "I remember I bring you milk, Joe. You, Hub. You, Mart. You, Hy. Now you here in my house and drink my scotch. Good," he said. He nodded. "I'm happy."

He turned slowly until he was facing Hy and he held out his hand. Hy took it and Lev Simon put his other hand over the boy's. "Doctor," he said. "Good night, Doctor." He nodded. "My pleasure."

He held Hy's hand and gave his left hand to Marty. "Doctor, too," he said. "My red one. Champeen. I remember you like a toothpick, so thin, have every kind sickness. Doctors take care,

now purry soon you take care other people." He shook his head. "No more fight. No more. I'm very happy you my son, Marty."

Joe knew then why Lev Simon had gotten out of his bed. This was not in the strongbox this morning, nor had Lev Simon briefed him on this.

Lev took Hub's hand in both of his. "Engineer," he said. "Poppa with his own son. Kiss your son for me. See him for sure in the spring," he said, winking. Hub got white, but Lev Simon let go his hand and looked at Joe.

"How you like, Joe? Good, huh? Nice boys, huh? Sure never expected four such good ones, huh? Sure don't deserve *such* fine boys.

"Ai-yai," Lev said, and he pushed his hand at Joe. "Ai-yai, I sure don't complain tonight," he said. Joe held Lev's hands, held them and caressed them, wanting to keep him here in the living room, wanting never to let him go, seemed that he could not let him go. "Pa," Joe said.

"Pa," Hub said.

"Joe," said Lev. "Joe," smiling. "Say hello there to Joe Louis, that DiMaggio, all big shots. Say true, Joe, please?" He nodded. "Please? No more bluffing?"

"No more."

"Pa," Hub said, but Lev Simon would not listen and would not turn.

He nodded at Joe. "I proud of you, Joe. Makes me proud see your name. My name."

Then he took his hands from his son and shoved them into the bathrobe. He stepped back until he was standing under the arch. "My pleasure," he said.

He looked from one to the other, looked carefully at each, as though trying to remember them, and then he took one step backward.

"My real pleasure," Lev Simon said.

A LITTLE SLEEP, A LITTLE SLUMBER

BY NORMAN KATKOV

Eighteen months ago another book by Norman Katkov was published to the accompaniment of some of the most excited praise and violent protest that has ever been given a first novel. Its title was *Eagle at My Eyes*, and while one critic was calling it "a great book," another was crying, "No, it should be burned!"

Yet even those who reacted most passionately against the Jewish-Gentile love story that Katkov told in that book agreed that they had seldom read a story with such driving emotion, with its heart laid so bare.

The book you are holding is Katkov's second novel. It, too, is an honestly em-

tional story, but in a way vastly different from his first. In it there are tears, and burning anger, and gently loving laughter. But most of all there is love—the deep love of a simple man for his family and the humble love of an immigrant for his new country.

His name was Lev Simon, and on that day he lay dying of a heart attack his grown sons returned to stand beside him—each remembering his own father with their father.

This book is Lev Simon's story as told by his sons and he remembered it—the story of a man who entered America illegally and became perhaps a better American than most who are born here. It is the story of a man who was never ashamed of his honest sentiment of family love. It is the story of a frightened and bewildered man whose faith brought him finally to

(Continued on back flap)

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